

RAZZORCAKE



#25

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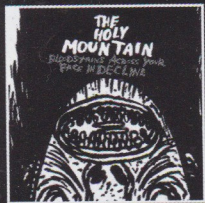
RUMBLESEAT



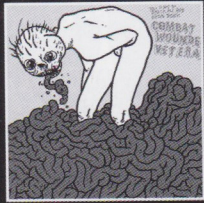
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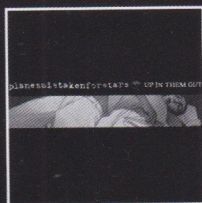
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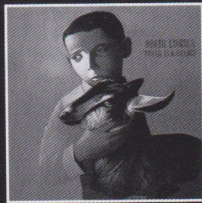
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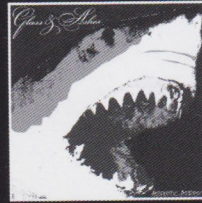
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RAZORCAKE

Not too long ago, I went to visit some relatives back in Alabama. At first, everybody just asked me how I was doing, how I liked it out in California, why I'm not married yet, that sort of thing. You know, just the usual small talk questions that people feel compelled to ask, not because they're really interested but because they'll feel rude if they don't. Later on in the day, my aunt started talking to me about Razorcake, and at one point she asked me if I got benefits.

I figured that it was pretty safe to assume that she didn't mean free records and the occasional pizza. "You mean like health insurance?"

"Yeah," she said. "Paid vacation, sick days, all that stuff. Benefits."

I shook my head. "I actually don't get paid for the stuff that I do," I said.

Her jaw practically hit the floor. It was as if she had never even imagined that people would ever do any work unless they were getting paid for it. "Then why do you do it?"

At the time, I probably did what I usually do when somebody asks me a tough question: I shrugged and gave some vague non-answer like, "I dunno, I guess I just like it." But it got me thinking. Thinking about washing dishes and cooking chicken wings, and about how at the end of those fifty- and sixty-hour weeks, yeah, I got paid, but what the hell difference did that make? A paycheck's just money. What good does that do?

I thought about how the only thing that could take my mind off work, the only thing that I had to look forward to, was listening to records that most people saw as just trinkets from some disposable culture, some fad that I would hopefully grow out of before I settled into that Certified Public Accountant job that everybody expected of me. I thought about how listening to those records, whether it was

Radon, the Bassholes, or Teengenerate, during every spare moment of my time, even at 3 A.M., was often the only thing that made me feel like I could make something positive out of my life and not just spend it mopping floors.

For a long time, records, particularly punk rock records, were my only tether to any semblance of hope. Growing up, I was always out of place even among people who were sort of into the same things as me. It's probably a pretty lame thing to say, but sitting in my room listening to Dillinger Four or Panthro UK United 13 was probably the only time that I ever felt like I wasn't alone.

But listening to music is kind of an abstract. It makes you feel good but there's not really any tangible reward that you get from it. The first time I ever hung-out with Todd and Sean and Megan and the rest of the Razorcake folks was the first time that I ever felt relaxed around other people, like I wasn't some gringo wasting everybody's time. And from the moment when Todd picked me up from that Greyhound station to right now, life hasn't been such a disappointment, like I'm accomplishing something instead of treading water in my hometown. And to me, that's worth a lot more than a paycheck at the end of every week.

But I still wonder about my aunt and how I could explain that to her in a way that she could understand. Can you say, "I feel like certain musicians plug their instruments directly into the happy part of my brain" to a woman who, in all likelihood, has not bought a piece of recorded music since Jimmy Carter was in office or ever even thought of music as something other than background noise, and have her understand what the hell you're talking about? If it's something that you really love, do you even *need* to rationalize it for other people?

—Josh

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June 1st, 2005

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Thank you list: Rubylith, X-acto patience, and a steady hand thanks to John Miner for the cover and "Dude, my neighbor's lawn is awesome... sorry I'm late," thanks to Dan Monick for the picture on the cover and the Hot Snakes pictures in the interview; Monkeys, yay! Robots, boo! thanks to Chris Larsen for the new section headers; Telephone chords that look like umbilical chords thanks to Terry Rentzepis for his illustration in Liz's column; Pack of smokes and drawing people's skeletons on their skin thanks to Keith Rosson for his illustrations in Jimmy's column; If Canada only had a climate more like Florida, we might defect thanks to Randy Iwata for the Nardwuar assistance; Look really hard and you'll see a vagina thanks to Rob Ruelas for his illustration in Nardwuar's column; Thanks to Lincoln Clarkes for the Timothy Leary one-step-to-the-grave shot; Microphone-chipped teeth thanks to Janelle Jones for her North Lincoln interview; It's a fact: photos look better with a can of Pabst in the foreground thanks to Brooke Lackey for her North Lincoln photos; Southern gentleman, war eagle thanks to BD Williams for the Federation-X interview; Tangerine fists of fury thanks to Funzilla for her photos; Fat wrestlers with high thresholds of pain - perfect for a band name thanks Julia Smut for laying out the Giant Haystacks interview; What's a little beer spit in your face when the fire of rock'n'roll is burning thanks to Brian Mosher for his Boston (not the band, not LA) article; I do believe there's a filled cavity, all the way back in Michelle Dent's mouth thanks to E.Law for the photos; You probably won't even get a nickel for recycling it thanks to our record reviewers Mr. Z, Kat Jetson, Lord Kveldfur, Sean Koepenick, Buttertooth, Toby, Donofthedickies, Cuss Baxter, and Heela; Books, they got words... and stuff... thanks to Karla and Heela for their reviews; Zines, too inky for toilet paper, thanks to Brian Howe, Rob Ruelas, Amy Adoyzie, Greg Barbera, and Lord Kveldfur; Drum solo overdose and specific times not to eat lasagna thanks to Mr. Z, Lord Kveldfur, and Aphid Peewit for their DVD reviews.



Norb, officiating his first ever wedding ceremony.
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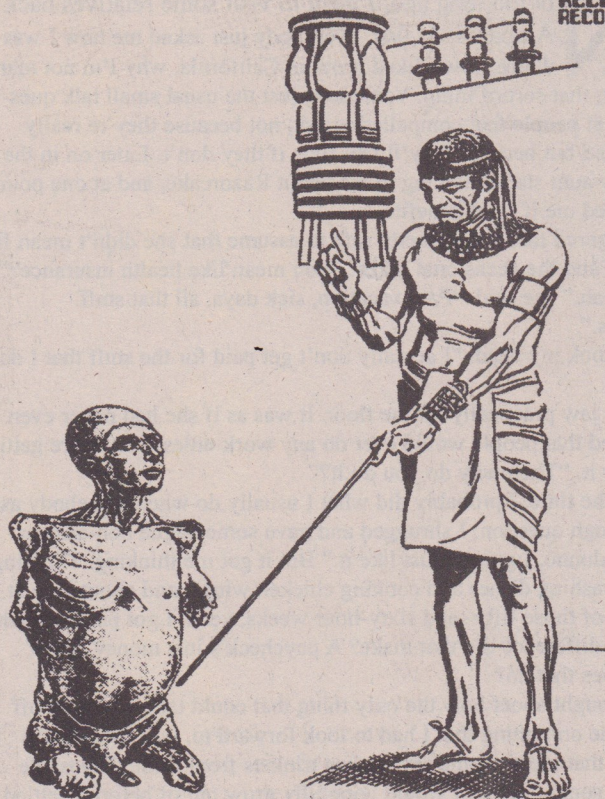
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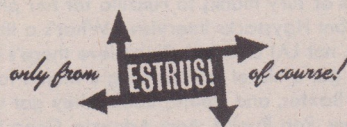
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RAZORCAKE

Issue #25 April / May 2005

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"A weed is a plant out place."

Jim Thompson *The Killer Inside Me*

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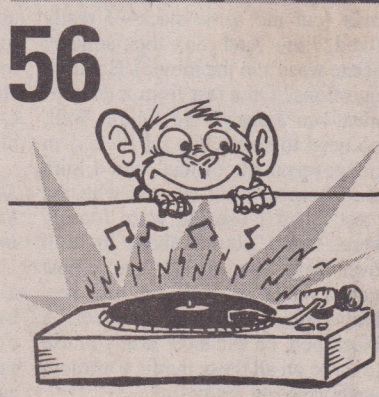
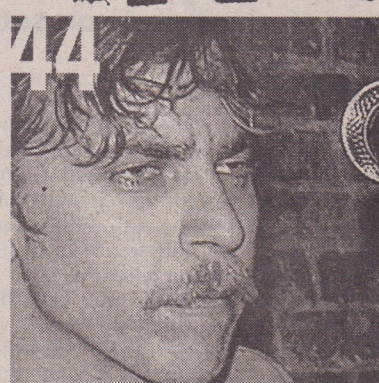
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Individual opinions expressed within are not necessarily those of Razorcake/Gorsky, Inc.

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DESIGNATED DALE

I'M AGAINST IT

You're doing a show with The Riverboat Gamblers and they've finished their set. Your band's next and you set up. The last thought in your mind before you start your set is:

"Fuck."

Remember taking your first written exam at the DMV? That narrow, long sheet full of multiple-choice questions that seemed like it was gonna be a walk in the park, didn't it? That is, until afterward, you learned that there were a handful of trick questions that made you feel the same way Ray Charles did when he stepped in a pile of doggy soft serve for the first time as a blind man (cut me some slack—I really liked Ray. And no, this squishy scene wasn't in the movie). But trick questions? On a test from a government-run agency? Go figure. Well, no need to sweat like fat Elvis. I'm no government official and I sure ain't here to trick anyone with the "test" (and I use the word loosely here, folks) you're about to mull over here... or am I? You're just gonna have to read on and see. Nonetheless, go grab yourself a black pen, or whatever else you use to write on all those public bathroom walls, and get ready for...

"OH, SHIT! I KNOW THIS ONE!"

(AKA, "Fuck you, Dale. Only YOU would ask that")

1) The Ramones were once produced by an "innocent until proven guilty" entertainment burnout named:

- a) O.J. "Stab My Wife" Simpson
- b) Peter "Bullets 'N Barretta" Blake
- c) Phil "The Pill" Spector

2) The Dickies:

- a) are nowhere close to retiring
- b) are sagging on the ass of all the retarded Fred Durst wannabes at OzzFest
- c) have been signed to a PBS children's show featuring Stuart, the magical penis hand puppet

3) If you consider the band Good Charlotte the best thing since sliced bread, then:

- a) your dumb ass deserves to be taken for every cent you own
- b) our own Megan Pants has a knuckle sandwich waiting with your face written all over it
- c) both a & b

4) The Candy Snatchers:

- a) have all become youth ministers and have changed their musical direction to Christian contemporary
- b) were those creepy older kids who rolled young'uns for their loot on Halloween night
- c) will kick your ass and continue to bleed for rock and roll

5) Which of the following bands has Gene Simmons of KISS unashamedly stolen from?

- a) New York Dolls
- b) Alice Cooper
- c) Are you kidding?! Gene Simmons says he started *both* of these bands, as well as KISS! In fact, he's determined to believe that he created rock'n'roll, too. Just ask him.

6) The Controllers:

- a) actually started out as an all-black soul group from Alabama called The Epics in 1965
- b) included members who later went on to form bands such as The Gears and Kaos
- c) both a & b

7) If Paul Westerberg (former singer of the much-missed and loved Replacements) decides to travel around the world in eighty days, it would take him approximately how long?

- a) 80 days
- b) 160 days
- c) Undetermined, due to Paul's ongoing delusion that the world revolves around him

8) Besides being one of the first and best bands from the burgeoning punk scene in L.A. many years ago, what else does Black Flag continue to do today?

- a) Cover Greg Ginn's health insurance
- b) Kill bugs and insects on contact
- c) Re-record their catalog, classic rock style. For example, "Nervous Breakdown" is now "19th Nervous Breakdown" (no relation to The Stones)

9) Sammy Hagar is to Van Halen as Brandon Cruz is to:

- a) The Courtship of Eddie's Father
- b) the Dead Kennedys
- c) not driving 55, either

10) Which of the following would best describe Glenn Danzig's Achilles' Heel?

- a) The side of his face while backstage in Arizona (three syllables: pay-per-view)
- b) The final and fatal bruise to that damaged ego of his (keyword: "Misfits." Watch the fun ensue)
- c) His heart (like any other human being, Glenn simply hungers for love and understanding)

11) DIY is the age-old acronym for:

- a) Do It Yiddish-Style (no worries, yentas—it's all kosher)
- b) Do It Yourself
- c) Donkeys Internally Yeast-infected

12) Hardcore reached its culmination:

- a) when Davey Tiltwheel tested (ok, threw) part of an arcade game down a bowling alley in Las Vegas
- b) inside the dank, moist interiors of adult theatres in the 1970s showing films featuring stars with names like John Holmes and Linda Lovelace
- c) with bands like Minor Threat and The Middle Class

13) "X":

- a) was a Spike Lee film often called *Malcolm Ten* by mistake
- b) were a great band that made some time-tested LPs

c) are the two strips of duct tape that should be slapped over Exene Cervenka's mouth when she drones on and on while onstage. And while the roll of tape is out, get Spike Lee and Lars Ulrich over here, too.

14) John Boy Walton is to "emo" as Arthur Fonzerelli is to:

- a) death metal
- b) The Village People
- c) fuck off, Peter Pompador. *Happy Days* has been cancelled for years

15) Mike Ness of Social Distortion needs to:

- a) collect royalties for his eyeliner technique stolen by bands like Good Charlotte (see question #3)
- b) thank his lucky stars for landing ex-Plugz drummer Charlie Quintana in the SD fold (Go, Chalo!)
- c) start wearing a "Have a Nice Day" smiley-face button on his guitar strap. Smiles are contagious!

16) Which one of these SNL alumni allegedly sat in live with the Dead Boys many moons ago?

- a) Chevy Chase on rhythm guitar. But Chevy pissed off Cheetah Chrome by trying to usurp him on a lead break, thereby cutting the set short from Chrome smashing his guitar across Chase's face.
- b) John Belushi on drums. Belushi jumped in during the "Blitz Benefit" at CBGB for Dead Boys drummer Johnny Blitz, who was in the hospital mending some life-threatening stab wounds.
- c) Dan Akroyd on vocals. *The Blues Brothers* skit might've flown on SNL, but Bators and the rest of the band weren't having the schtick on their stage. He was promptly ejected off the stage on his ass.

17) You're doing a show with The Riverboat Gamblers and they've finished their set. Your band's next and you set up. The last thought in your mind before you start your set is:

- a) "Why the hell are we headlining?"
- b) "Fuck."
- c) "Man, that singer climbed about the stage like a spider monkey scaling a banana tree!"

18) What was God really doing on the 7th day?

- a) Penciling in the future birth date of one Ian Fraser Kilmister (Lemmy) for scheduled arrival on December 24, 1945, warts and all. Motörhead shall be done, amen.
- b) Going down his things-to-be-list and checking off the year 1974. That year will be the year of the very first rehearsal that will go on to form a band to change rock and roll forever—the Ramones.
- c) Both a & b

19) "Throw Rag" is a commonly used term for:

- a) a disgruntled female motorist who's down to her last object to wing out her vehicle window towards her target of road rage during "that time of the month"
- b) yo' momma
- c) rock and roll (not to be confused with "crap rock"—that would be "throwaway")

20) Punk rock is:

- a) getting a swift kick in the ass from Art Fuentes
- b) whatever.the fuck I say it is
- c) are you serious? Put a sock in it.

All done! The first person to email me all twenty correct answers gets a cool prize that won't be picked outta my nose, believe it, or not (I'll use *that* to seal your envelope. How's that grab yer ass?). All winning entries received thereafter get the finger because there'll be no 2nd and 3rd place or "runners-up" jive happening. What do think this is? The lottery? Get movin'...

I'm Against It



—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com



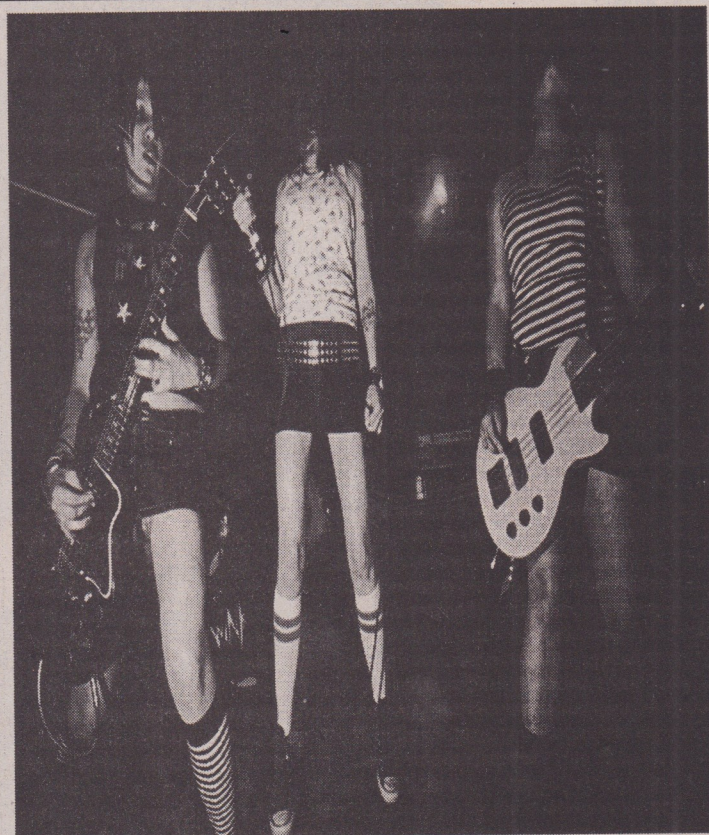
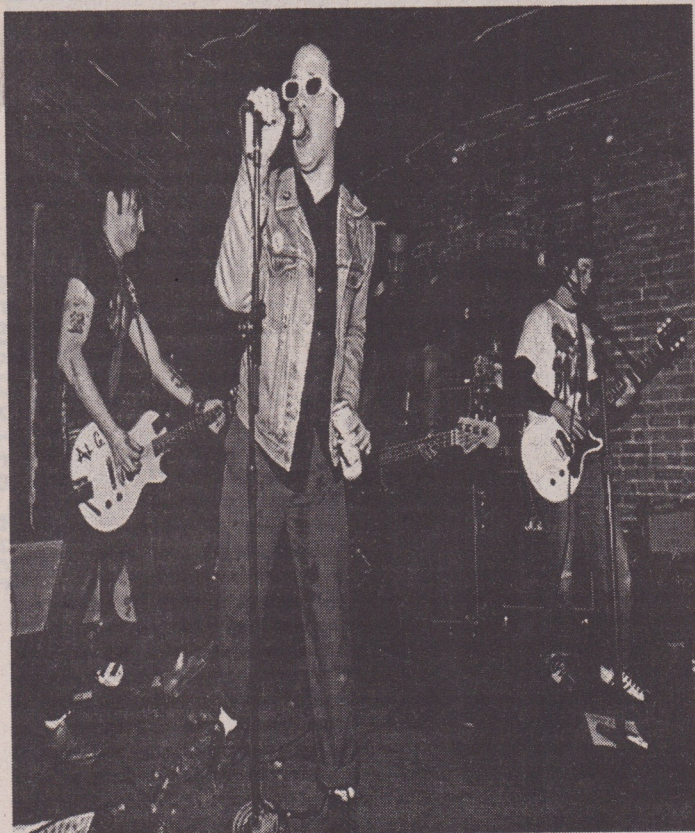
DESIGNATED DALE

"Rookie Sensation" Mike Wiebe of the Riverboat Gamblers, encouraging audience participation, one stumble at a time.
(photo by Todd Taylor)

The EnDS and The WINKS



HOT DISAPPOINTMENT TOUR!



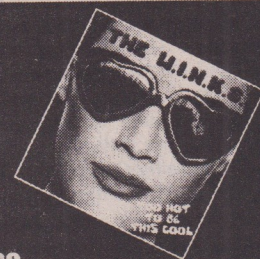
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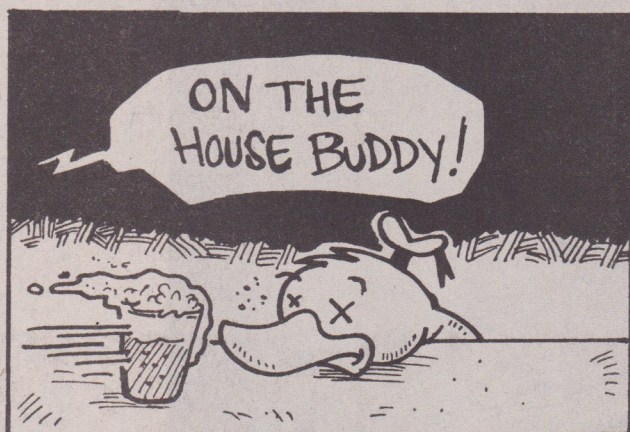
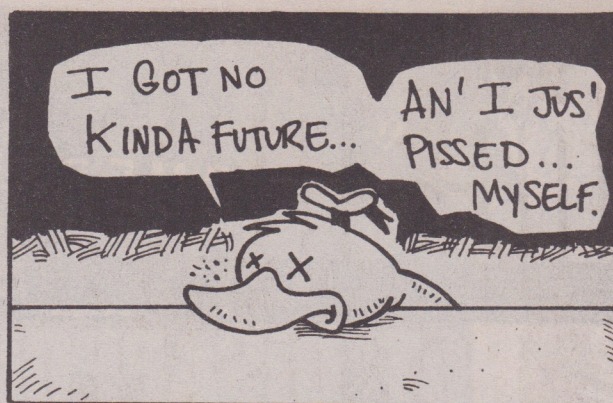
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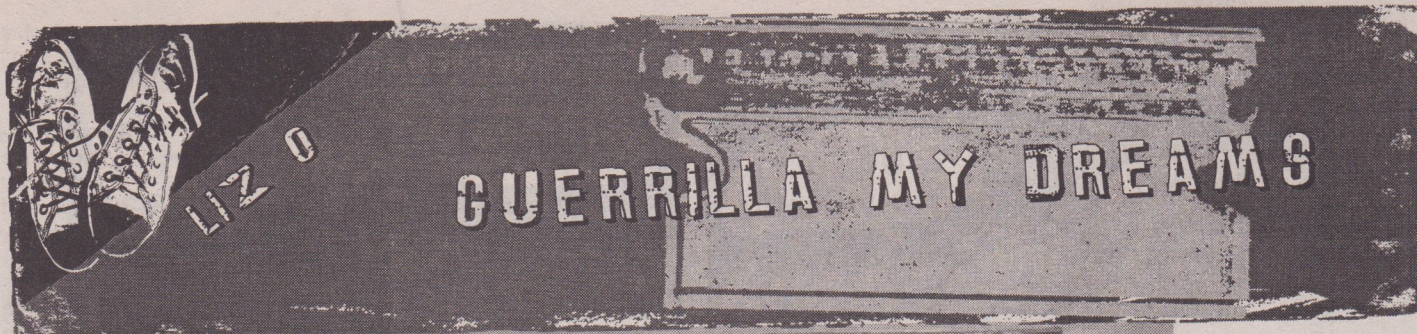


Illustration by Terry Rentzepis; www.alltenthumbs.com

My Day on KROQ

I had been in the office for ten minutes and I already knew that I was in for the sort of day where minutes dripped like water from a leaky faucet. It was the Tuesday after Christmas, midway through an abbreviated workweek that would serve as my last inside this drafty white prison. I had already rummaged through the office to find that my boss, an attorney who is considered longwinded even by the standards of his profession, had finished ten full-sized tapes of dictation before leaving for vacation, half of which were marked "RUSH" in fat red stamp markings. His other secretary, who had only been at the firm for a month, decided the day before that she would be taking off the rest of the week to go on a trip with her boyfriend. Those ten tapes, all of which contained a minimum of five cases, were now mine.

I wheeled a cart piled high with five-years-and-running workers' compensation case files to my desk, muttering curse words every time a rubber band popped and legal pleadings spilled onto the floor.

I looked around the office. This week, both attorneys, the office manager, the paralegal and the aforementioned new secretary were out on vacation. The lead secretary and the file clerk were sick. That left one hearing representative, one recently hired receptionist, one other secretary, and me. Theoretically, I could just not do the work. Next week, my boss would rant in a tone similar to Charles Schulz's adults and I would be safe at home.

I smiled and turned on the radio.

For the past year-and-a-half, I had sat at this

desk feeling my ass gradually spread to encompass the whole of the cushioned swivel chair, slowly learning that even an ergonomic keyboard cannot prevent the onset of carpal tunnel syndrome. I spent the bulk of each day transcribing fifteen-page letters filled with five-syllable orthopedic maladies, legal diagnoses, and numeric formulas that somehow translate into the settlement offer over which all parties will argue until the case goes to trial. The only thing that kept me from losing my mind to legalese I never wanted to understand was KROQ.

Before entering this job, KROQ, the allegedly world famous commercial alternative station that inhabits the 106.7 frequency in Los Angeles, and I had not been on speaking terms for about a decade. The best friend of my adolescence had dropped me, as well as countless other misfit teenagers, for the popular crowd sometime in the early-1990s when Infinity Broadcast Corporation invited the station to a party hosted by grungy metal bands of the Pacific Northwest. The slightly geeky, oftentimes maudlin pop groups that called KROQ home were not invited and, consequently, neither was I.

To be honest, KROQ and I had yet to truly make amends. Our newly rekindled acquaintanceship developed over necessity, not desire. Like every other radio in our office, mine could only pick up three stations. K-EARTH 101, the oldies station, literally plays one Beatles song every half-hour. Since the Beatles will always provoke my ranting on the ways of Middle-Aged White Male Music Journalists, who underestimate the influence of funk and soul, stick dance music in a gay ghetto, vilify Yoko Ono and dub Connor Oberst and every other white-

belt wearing, guitar-slinging sensitive lad the next Bob Dylan, this was out of the question. STAR 98.7 may have scored former KROQ jock Richard Blade for its flashback segments, but outside of that, Ryan Seacrest's understudies offer useless celebrity gossip between tracks from Dave Matthews and Alanis Morissette.

I turned to KROQ not because I liked the music, not because I enjoyed the on-air banter, but because it was my only connection to the world outside of this office. Prior to the hiring of the receptionist a few weeks prior, I was the youngest person by twenty years. I had become the ears for rants on menopause and bombastic speeches decrying the music of today as far inferior to that of 1974 (well, you know, except for U2). Inside this office, I was as much of an outsider as I was sixteen years prior, as a studious, music-obsessed sixth grade student. And so, trudging across the prog-rockery of Mars Volta's new single, "The Widow," I realized that I was waiting for KROQ to save me, like it did when I was a young girl.

Strange as it may seem, I can still remember that exact moment when KROQ made a completely ordinary life seem slightly less pedestrian. Sometime during the summer of 1988, we had been dragged cross-city to visit my dad's friend and his family. The eldest of his daughters, who was probably fourteen or fifteen at the time, noticed my INXS t-shirt.

"You like INXS?"

I nodded and grinned, conjuring an image of Michael Hutchence striking a messianic pose, chestnut hair falling over his eye. *Kick* had been my favorite album of the previous year, an album that had only recently been surpassed by Depeche Mode's *Music for the Masses*.

"What else do you like?"

"Depeche Mode and, um, other stuff like that."

"Oh, yeah. I'm going to see Depeche Mode next week," she beamed before turning on the radio. "Do you listen to KROQ?"

"Huh?" To be honest, I had never heard of the station. I only knew Depeche Mode and INXS because I watched a lot of MTV. "No, actually, I listen to Power," naming the station that, at the time, was the home to every Hi NRG dance beat produced.

"Oh, that's a little too cha cha for me. KROQ is really cool, though."

"Yeah, you're right." I had absolutely no idea what cha cha meant, but I figured that it had something to do with the gum-smacking, dirty-dancing Catholic school girl, Cha Cha Di Gregorio, from *Grease*. I deduced that she was talking about Cha Cha's 1988 incarnation, girls who had hair so well-moussed that the curls would make a crunching sound against the rustle of the wind, who wore short-shorts and real-

Sitting in my office space, listening to "Slow Hands" by Interpol, closely followed by a Killers track that sounds remarkably similar to Underworld's late-1990s dance hit "Born Slippy," I wondered if there are kids in Northridge now who drop pens and gasp for air as though these songs could consume them.

By the time Kaiser Chief's stomp over the airwaves with "I Predict a Riot," a bouncy throwback to the Damned circa "New Rose," I wonder if what I'm actually looking for is a sense of nostalgia. Is it impossible for me to actually listen to KROQ without constantly looking back at what it was in those years bridging together the new wave 1980s and grunge 1990s? The station is definitely not what it was then, but these are different times. That KROQ existed in an era before Internet radio stations and music blogs, before we could catch commercial-free stations on cable television sets and satellite radios. At that point, radio in its traditional form was the primary source for new music. To think that teenagers now take diligent

talga can halt the development of music, but isn't it also important to understand the past? Wouldn't fans of Postal Service like to be introduced to Chapterhouse?

Just as in adolescence, KROQ doesn't merely lay as a backdrop, it wraps its way around the mundane activities of the day. I felt my body twitch in annoyance as a co-worker rambled about her holiday activities, thus breaking my concentration on the Cure's "Lovesong." I learned to type in time to Franz Ferdinand's "Take Me Out" and the White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army" and wrote scathing notes to myself on Post Its as a response to Linkin Park and Jay Z's heinous acknowledgement of the mash up trend. My foot released itself from the pedal of the dictation machine and headphones automatically slipped out of place as I leaned back to take in Radiohead's "Karma Police." I went back to my work only to stop again and dwell on how it has become impossible for me to differentiate between the soaring, seemingly Thom Yorke-inspired vocals of Keane and Snow

I turned to KROQ not because I liked the music, not because I enjoyed the on-air banter, but because it was my only connection to the world outside of this office.



ly big socks to roll along to the latest Samantha Fox single at Skateland on Saturdays. She was, essentially, talking about my friends, the ones I secretly despised. These were girls who, by the age of eleven, had already learned that the way to get through life was to look cute and play dumb. At eleven, I was aware that I was too gawky to ever be cute and too much of a loud-mouth to ever successfully play dumb. I wasn't going to be like the other kids at my tiny, suburban parochial school, so I might as well stop trying right now. Who needed friends anymore? I had KROQ.

During my middle school years, there were entire days spent listening to KROQ while scribbling teenage prose into notebooks. If a song pierced through my heart, I would stop to hold my breath and drop my pen, only to pick it up again to take notes when the DJ announced the piece. The The's "Kingdom of Rain," the Waterboys' "Whole of the Moon," Happy Mondays' "Step On," and Chapterhouse's "Pearl"—these were the songs that I sought because of KROQ. I developed passing relationships with the salespeople at Tempo Records, mostly college boys in Joy Division t-shirts, asking which Bauhaus album a Peter Murphy fan should buy first and whether Ride was a better purchase than Adorable. The radio became more than just a noise in the background; it became my guide. By thirteen, I was trying to steady my hand long enough to achieve Siouxsie eyes. I had professed a declaration of celibacy until I met Morrissey, or at least obtained the Band-Aid he wore over his nipple in the "November Spawned a Monster" video, or, at the very, very least, met a boy who could write songs for me the way that Robert Smith did for Mary.

notes while wasting away days in suburban bedrooms seems ludicrous in the age of iTunes, My Space and an endless list of Internet and satellite radio broadcasts. KROQ's current crop of hot bands—Interpol, the Killers, Franz Ferdinand, the Shins, Postal Service, Muse—had large followings far before receiving any airplay on the station, thanks to online music communities. Right now, KROQ, perhaps like every other commercial alternative station in the country, has gone from being a trendsetter to playing catch-up with the constant influx of new music.

Perhaps this is the station's way of redeeming itself for the metal years, but playing catch-up seems to be something that KROQ has done best in its Infinity era. This is a station that picked up on techno in the late-1990s after unceremoniously dumping anything remotely electronic from its playlist following Nirvana's big break, that may still pat itself on the back for breaking Prodigy's 1996 hit "Firestarter," but forgets that five years earlier, it was playing "Charly." And how many people actually remember Metallica as part of KROQ's regular rotation before it became the biggest band in the world? Part of the problem with KROQ now is that it forgets its own history, a fact that becomes painfully evident while listening to the Flashback Lunch. Even though the station has been operating in some form since at least the late-1970s, few songs during the forty-minute stretch were released prior to 1992. Where the radio station used to maintain a strong balance of the old and new, outside of the Flashback Lunch, alternative oldies are limited to the odd track from the Ramones, Beastie Boys or Social Distortion and an occasional spin of Dramarama's "Anything, Anything." Sure, nos-

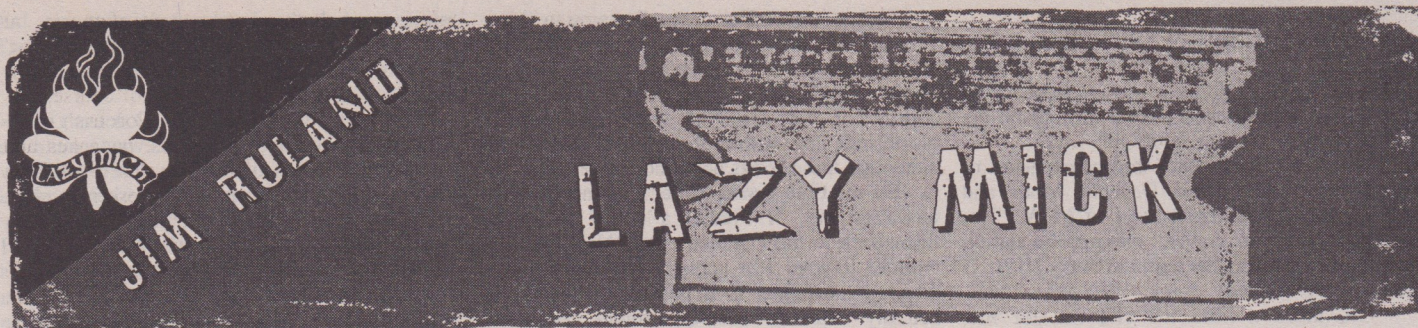
Patrol, yet I can hum along to tracks from both.

It seems as though KROQ is making definite strides towards recapturing its golden era. Slightly more than ten years ago, KROQ completely abandoned its longtime fans—artsy kids who appreciated everything from punk to industrial to shoegaze—to pander to the masses. KROQ was no longer an alternative, it was just an outlet for new, commercial rock. It shunned artists like Sleater Kinney and Pulp in favor of Stone Temple Pilots and Korn; Ladytron and the Faint for Good Charlotte and Hoobastank. However, on this particular day, aside from a few major players, the rap-rock and mall punk sounds of the popular crowd slowly fade in favor of sweet and jangly guitar pop and new wave-inspired dance rock that makes for automatic teenage alienation. The station is still miles away from the forefront of contemporary music and the chances of it ever closing in on today's leaders are still fairly slim. The choppy, experimental dance rhythms of the Tigerbeat 6 gang and the house-inflected rock of DFA productions may never make it onto the 106.7 frequency, but that's okay. The station can still function as an entry point for kids searching for life outside of stifling suburbs.

KROQ and I grew apart years ago, like most childhood friends do. As I furiously typed my way through one of those rush tapes during the last hour of the workday, I came to the conclusion that things between us would never be the same, but there was no reason that KROQ and I couldn't start to make amends.

—Liz Ohanesian





DORK OF THE DANCE

I never wanted to be an Irish dancer.

I'm not saying my parents held a gun to my head and forced me into it, but it sure as hell wasn't my idea. I didn't even know what Irish dancing was. This was long before the Riverdance craze swept across America and put Irish dancing on the map. I'm pretty sure it was something the older of my two younger sisters wanted to do, who was into anything that involved a stage and being the center of attention, which, in retrospect, is probably a good thing she got out of her system before she turned eighteen. Nevertheless, if I knew then what I know now, there's no way in hell I would have been an Irish dancer.

Every Monday after school me, my brother, and my two sisters would pile into the baby-blue Ford LTD station wagon and drive to the Knights of Columbus in Arlington, Virginia, for two hours of dance practice at the O'Neil-James School of Irish Dance. I'll never forget the first practice. Our dance teacher, Laureen James, a bona fide Irish woman with a pronounced brogue and a dancer's carriage, had just had her white blonde hair permed and I couldn't get over the smell. Every time she came near me I wanted to gag. That night I told my mother I didn't want to go back.

"Why?"

"The teacher stinks."

"Mrs. James is a very good teacher."

"She makes me sick."

My mother thought I was being a smart ass and sent me back the next week and I was relieved to discover the weird smell was gone. With that out of the way, I actually was able to focus on the dancing, which was remarkably easy. I'd been listening to traditional Irish music all my life, so that wasn't a problem. I knew the difference between a jig and a reel by the time I was ten. Even if you don't know the music, if you can keep time and count to seven, you can learn how to be an Irish dancer. Rhythm isn't essential. Actually, a lack of rhythm is sort of an asset because in traditional Irish solo dances the dancer keeps his hands straight down at his sides and his eyes straight ahead. The legs do all the work. Whether you're dancing a jig, a reel, or a hornpipe, the idea is to cover as much ground as possible with your legs while your upper body resembles a soldier standing at attention. It wasn't nearly as difficult as, say, break dancing, and I mastered the basics very quickly. I was actually pretty good at it, but that's not why I kept at it. I came back for the girls.

The girls outnumbered the guys by a factor of seven to one. Some were younger, some were older, but there were a plethora of cuties. I was way too retarded to initiate con-

versations with girls on my own, but dance practice opened up all kinds of opportunities to not only talk to girls who went to other schools, but to hold their hand during dances that involved multiple partners. These dances aren't much different from square dancing, in that there's lots of twirling and partner-switching, like porn only much more wholesome. We'd spend hours practicing an eight-person reel and I'd eagerly anticipate the three or four seconds I spent holding hands with whatever girl, usually someone much older, I had a crush on at the time. It never went any farther than that, but those few seconds were almost worth all the humiliation I would soon endure.

I grew up in an intensely Irish-American household. My father was a member of a million organizations and committees involved in Irish cultural affairs. From elaborate black-tie dinners to Irish festivals, dance competitions to regattas held in multiple cities, my father was a compulsive organizer. My mother was a talented embroiderer who made clothes, costumes, and various Irish-themed knick-knacks like wall hangings with sayings like "Cad Mille Failtre" ("One hundred thousand welcomes") or political slogans like "Up the Border!" She even published an Irish arts and crafts book. On Saturday mornings, the Ruland clan would wake up, and to inspire us with our chores my father would put rebel songs on the turntable so that the Wolfetone's Ronnie Drew's gravelly voice belted songs like "The Men behind the Wire" into every freaking corner of the house. There was simply no getting away from it. In fact, right around the time that we started taking Irish dance lessons, my parents started hosting Irish music lessons in our house, which, of course, we were forced to take. I learned to play the tin whistle, which is a kind of flute (and you thought your childhood was rough). There's a truism in Ireland that holds that some Irish-Americans are "More Irish than the Irish." My parents were all that and then some: they were Irish Nazis.

The thing about the O'Neil-James School of Irish Dance is that not only were we expected to take lessons and practice what we'd learned, we were expected to perform, and not just in recitals. We performed in summer festivals, Christmas pageants, you name it. Things really ramped up during the month of March and we performed one or two times a night during St. Patrick's Day week. Some of the shows were small affairs: dancing for a room full of senior citizens at a retirement home. Other shows were sold-out performances for thousands and thousands of people in concert halls and amphitheatres. The pinnacle of all this was the

Washington, D.C., St. Patrick's Day Parade. I suppose this sounds somewhat glamorous, but to fully understand the scope of my horror you had to understand the uniform:

- White dress shirt
- Green tie
- Green corduroy jacket with gold buttons
- Gold shawl fastened with gold brooch
- Black dance shoes
- Green knee socks
- Gold kilt

That's right, a kilt, and there's nothing a pre-adolescent boy wants to do less than spend St. Patrick's Day prancing around the horse manure on Constitution Avenue in a gold fucking kilt. Once, the year my father was named Irishman of the Year, I had to be in the fucking thing twice: once with my dance school, and again with my father. The actual parade wasn't so bad, but getting to the staging area beforehand and back to the LTD afterwards was a nightmare. Black kids would check us out, wide-eyed with astonishment, and turn to their mothers to ask:

"Momma, why that boy wearing a dress?"

If I heard it once, I heard a thousand times. Why, indeed? I asked myself the same question over and over again, but I never came up with an answer that satisfied my parents. I wanted to quit Irish dancing, and when I told my father the reason why, figuring that he of all people would understand, he dismissed my complaint.

"It's your heritage, boy. Suck it up."

"Then you wear the dress."

"It's not a dress, it's a kilt, and if you talk to me in that tone of voice again, I'll clean your clock."

We had that conversation exactly once, and though my father never cleaned my clock, I'm holding it in reserve for that day when my parents, the judge, or head nurse at whatever detox unit I eventually end up in, calls me on my shit: "My parents made me wear a dress and march in parades!"

(Did I wear anything under the kilt? You bet your ass I did. I wore underwear and gold soccer shorts. I was twelve, you perverts.)

If I thought dancing in front of thousands of strangers in a kilt was humiliating, it was nothing like having to dance in full regalia before the entire student body at St. James Elementary, where I went to school. If it weren't for Freddy and Robbie, Mrs. James hulking sons, I never would have survived the experience.

The James brothers made it okay to be an Irish dancer. Freddy was a high school freshman at Bishop Denis J. O'Connell who played football and soccer. Robby was in my grade at St. James and while he wasn't one of the cool kids, he was strong and fast, and everyone was a little

bit afraid of him. I once watched him catch a line drive barehanded and, like a dinosaur, it took him a full minute before the blow registered and he felt any pain. The batter was so pissed he went back to the dugout choking back tears. No one ever gave them shit for being Irish dancers—at least not to their face—so by default, I, too, was spared.

The James brothers were two of the best dancers in the state, way better than my brother or I. They had a dance studio in their house and practiced all the time, something I seldom did unless I was actually at dance class. Plus, their mom was the teacher. I suppose they could have been great, if it wasn't for the James family's

in Virginia, D.C., Delaware, and upstate New York. I hated these events the same way that all kids hate doing things that involve spending every second of every hour of every day with your family, much of it in a station wagon.

The feis itself wasn't so bad even though they were all pretty much the same. Michael Flatley, the OLD (Original Lord of the Dance), was often one of the judges. My sister was elated if she won and would cry if she lost. My brother and I killed time by marshalling kids to play two-hand touch football or pick-up basketball games. There weren't nearly as many boys as there were girls and while my sister was going up against double-digit competition, there

trousers—fucking trousers. I became one of those assholes who rambles and rages in barrooms with rants that all began, "Back in the day..." My chief preoccupation, of course, was the kilt problem. In my imagination Irish dancing and kilts went together like pancakes and maple syrup. One without the other invalidated the entire formula. Ergo, what these men were doing up on the stage wasn't Irish dancing, it was something else. In other words, real Irish dancers wore kilts.

I've mellowed somewhat since then. Enough time has gone by that I can recall some memories without the sharp sting of regret. Whenever someone screwed up in the middle of

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other passion: disco dancing. This end of the operation was spearheaded by Fred Sr. who looked like a football coach but was not in the least bit afraid to shake his groove thing in polyester pants that flared at the feet and were tight everywhere else. Every once in a while our dance class would be held at the James's house and I would catch the tail end of a lesson for that other kind of dancing. It was too mortifying for words. I could be coerced into wearing green knee socks and a gold kilt on the streets of Washington, D.C., but I would have rather died than disco. I'm still not sure which would have been worse, disco dancing badly or giving an earnest effort.

Once it became obvious that my sister was a really good Irish dancer, and I mean championship level, they decided to enter her in an Irish dance competition, which was known as a feis. True to form, if one of the clan was doing it, we all did it, so every summer we piled into the LTD and drove up and down the eastern seaboard to compete against other dance schools

were seldom more than a handful of boys for me to compete against. Imagine a bunch of sullen pre-teens in the hot summer sun wearing jackets, ties, knee socks, and kilts. I managed to at least place in nearly every competition I entered. Somehow I won over sixty medals and trophies without ever being very good.

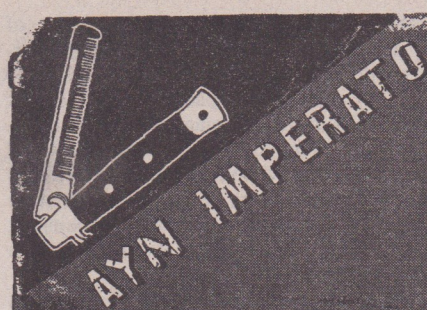
Each year, as I grew older and moved up the rankings, there were fewer and fewer people to compete against. I started to recognize the other dancers. Toward the end of my run, there was only three or four of us left, and everyone present, from my parents in the crowd to the musicians on the stage, knew I didn't stand a chance. My teen years were coming on like gangbusters and I was getting to be more of a pain in the ass to be around, especially when I was doing something I didn't want to do and had no chance of getting better at. It was time to hang it up.

I forgot all about Irish dancing for a while, but then Michael Flatley and Riverdance came roaring onto the scene, and I was pissed. The women were hotter than hot, and the gents wore

a routine and they bolted back into step, everyone laughed with relief that the first mistake had been made and the audience didn't have a clue. There were a few times when my brother, both sisters, and me were all performing in the same dance. I learned to like the sound of my medals jingling on my jacket. Sometimes I dream I am onstage, taking a bow, awash in applause. But what I love most is the music. When bands like Flogging Molly, Blood or Whiskey or the Tossers draw from traditional arrangements, I recognize them instantly, and when I do go to Irish street fairs and festivals, I can tell the difference between a jig and a reel in a heartbeat. My hands instinctively come together and my feet start tapping to the beat. All music, after all, whether it's being blared out of a cheap boom box or played on a stage, is dance music.

—Jim Ruland

**JIM
RULAND**



90803

Next to the Junior High Spring Dance... and playing with our wiener dog, doing cocaine with a bunch of older guys, who very well might be cute, seemed very tempting.

Hanging on the Tiger Phone

It was the decade of the novelty phone. The '80s. Telephones popped up everywhere in every shape imaginable—donut shapes, red phones shaped like a pair of lips. Mickey Mouse phones, with Mickey holding the receiver in his little gloved hand: Phones trimmed with an actual neon light. Polka dot. Cat-shaped. There was even something for jocks—a brown, football-shaped phone. A car phone in the '80s was a telephone fashioned in the shape of an actual car that roared like an engine when someone called, instead of rang.

There was innocence in those novelty phones. Phones with bright plastic buttons. Phones with spiral cords that connected to the wall, so you had to stay in one room to talk. We were tied to the relative security of our homes if we wanted to talk to someone. There was something safe in that, in talking to someone—a stranger even—in your home on a Mickey Mouse phone.

For my thirteenth birthday, I received the greatest present of my life up until that point in time—my own phone. It was a plastic donut-shaped, tiger-striped phone. The top half of the circle lifted off and on the bottom half were the tiny white buttons. I thought it was cool and rock and roll, in a very Van Halen-guitar-magazine sort of way. I lived in a small town.

Looking back, this was probably also a gift my mom gave to herself, so she wouldn't have to watch me sit in the kitchen for hours, listening to me gabbing with friends about the inane crap thirteen-year-old girls talk about. I could talk in the privacy of my room. It was on Christmas that I received the second greatest gift: my own, local-only phone line. To free up the regular phone line for important adult stuff. And to give me, a growing young girl, a little privacy.

I spent nights talking to girlfriends about school drama—the

forgot to shave and slurred a little when he spoke, and we wondered what was really in that coffee mug on his desk. Or the prissy English teacher who rang a bell when class began, and how Bryan Meyer glued that bell to her desk that one day. About who smoked in the football field after school. Which boys allegedly stuck their hands up your shirt when they made out. We talked about boys in our grade we absolutely did not have a crush on, which of course were the ones we wanted. But boys didn't really call on the phone at that age. They were too shy and awkward, or just not interested in girls enough yet.

But one day a boy did call. It was a wrong number. "Is Joe there?" the voice asked.

"Um, no."

"Are you sure?" He read off my phone number.

"Yea, that's mine. No Joe here though."

"That's weird. I'm having this little party, see? Just a little get together, and Joe's supposed to bring over the beer."

"Yea, that sucks."

"I guess I'll have to go to the store myself. Unless I can get in touch with Joe."

"Uh huh."

"At least I have the coke though."

"The coke?"

"Yea, do you do coke?"

I had. Drank Coke. That afternoon, actually. But I knew that wasn't what he meant.

"Uh yeah," I lied. "Sure."

"Well you can come over if you want," he paused, "and do some with us."

Hmmmm. I thought for a minute. Something was actually happening. I'd never been invited to a guy's house to do coke before.

"I don't know," I said, and for a brief moment I actually didn't know. I knew it was dumb to go to a stranger's house. Especially a strange guy who had called me out of the blue. But on the other hand, it was the most exciting proposition I'd received all year. Next to the Junior High Spring Dance, going to

the movies with Cathy and Gina, and playing with our wiener dog, doing cocaine with a bunch of older guys, who very well might be cute, seemed very tempting.

"Come on, it'll be fun."

"What about Joe?" I asked, genuinely concerned.

"Fuck Joe."

Fuck Joe, I repeated in my head.

"So, how old are you?" It finally occurred to me to ask.

"How old are you?" he asked back.

"Sixteen," I lied. It sounded like a respectably mature age.

"Sixteen, huh?" he said.

"What about you?"

"Oh, I'm around eighteen. We're all around that."

"Well I don't think I can come over tonight. I have to go to school in the morning. Early." And I did. It was Sunday night.

"Okay. You're missing out!" he kidded.

"Yeah, I'm sure. Well, I gotta go."

"All right."

"Bye," I said, and hung up the tiger receiver. I thought about it for a minute. Then didn't think about it too much for the rest of the night.

The next night I got another call. "Who's this?" I asked. I had forgotten about the wrong number call from the night before.

"Hi," he said.

"Who is this?" I asked again.

"It's Ron."

"Ron?"

"From last night. Remember, we talked last night?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Yeah, sorry to bother you. You just seemed like a nice person. I thought maybe we could be friends."

"Oh, thanks." I was surprised. A little nervous about talking to a stranger on the phone—it was against everything I had been told. But I was flattered. And bored with my math homework. He didn't seem like a crank caller. Just a nice, friendly guy who called the wrong number.

"What's your name?" he asked "Jenni," I said.

"Jenni," he repeated. "So where do you live?" he asked.

"I'm not gonna tell you that!" I joked. I was foolish, but not completely stupid. I grasped at a shred of caution.

"Okay," he said.

"So how was your party the other night?"

"It was fun. A couple people came over. One girl brought a bottle of wine. We did the blow." A bottle of wine. I thought he must be a pretty classy eighteen-year-old.

"I just watched *Moonlighting*," I said.

"Hmmm."

"Did pre-algebra homework. You know, boring stuff. What about you?"

"I just got home from work."

"Where do you work?"

"At this health club in Wayons."

"What do you do there?"

"You don't want to hear about my work. That's boring stuff."

"Okay."

I talked to Ron several times a week—he called often, but not every day. Talking to him was like talking to my diary. He seemed genuinely interested in my boring, adolescent life of Bubblicious, video games, and school hall banter. He had an older guy perspective. I'd never had a brother and he would flatter me and make me feel not so awkward and unsure of everything. Plus, I thought he might be cute. He sounded cute, and seemed very polite and mature for his age. And he did fun adult things like drink, do coke, and host small parties.

"So what do you like to do with boys?" he asked one day.

"I dunno," I said. I didn't have much experience to draw on. I told him about kissing Paul Saunders at the roller skating rink in 7th grade, but how he ended up dating Leslie Griffendorfer. The kiss had been mushy, wet. It left me feeling nothing, except maybe disappointment at the absence of feeling, but I didn't tell him that.

"You never think about doing anything else?" he pushed.

"Uh, I don't know," I said. "I guess I do."

"Like what do you think about?"

"I don't know. Being in a hot tub." I was grasping at straws, thinking of something he might like to hear.

"A hot tub, huh. What would you do in there?"

"Um, drink some wine," I paused, flushing. "Naked."

"Well I have a hot tub," he said.

"Really?"

"Yea. Come over and I'll show it to you."

"Maybe sometime."

"So when are you gonna come over?" he asked one day. He had started asking that a lot.

"Uh, I don't know."

"Why don't you come over on the weekend, when you don't have school?"

I was still tentative. He was nice and polite to me on the phone, but I still knew it was a risky thing to do.

"Let's meet somewhere first," I said.

"Okay. Where?"

"How about the Wayon train station?"

"That's pretty close to my house," he said.

The Wayon train station was a bit of a bike ride for me, but I still wasn't sure I wanted him to know where I lived. The train station was a place where I could walk by, see him first, and then say hello without him knowing it was me for sure.

"What time?" he asked.

"How about three o'clock."

"Saturday at three?"

"Okay, I'll come to the station Saturday at three," I agreed. "How will I know what you look like?"

"I'll wear black shorts. I have sandy-blond hair."

"Okay, see you then."

On Saturday, I went to get my bike from the garage. It was a blue Schwinn with a white plastic basket on the front. The basket had little pink plastic flowers on it. I was suddenly embarrassed of the bike. It was a kid's bike and I was meeting a teenage guy, to drink and maybe do coke and possibly even make out. Yet it was all I had. I could park it down the block and walk up to the station, so he wouldn't see the bike. Yeah, that would work. I got on and rode.

At the station I parked the bike down the block. Walking up to the yellow station, I thought about adult things I could talk about. I'd make up some scenario about drinking behind the schoolyard with a bunch of guys. Yeah. That was it. I'd talk about how my friends and I threw parties with beer. Beer and hot tubs. How I had just gotten my driver's license but couldn't afford a car yet. How I was anything except being thirteen.

My legs were shaking as I walked up the stairs. There were a few people on the platform. I walked slowly by them. And then there, at the end of the platform, I saw him. He was wearing black shorts, with longish sandy-blond hair that covered his face. Then he looked up and the hair pulled back from his face. My heart seized. He was at least forty-five years old. A creepy chill spread up my ankles, up the back of my legs and through the rest of my body. Still, I walked towards him. I wanted to see him up close. I walked quickly past, just moving my eyes towards him as I reached his side of the bench. His face looked flat and wrinkled, yet peaceful as he quietly read a newspaper. His hair was longish, not

dirty, but not styled. Not like anything. His body wasn't in bad shape for an old guy. But I saw it on his face when I passed—loneliness. I walked as nonchalantly as I could past him, down the stairs that led to the street again. When I hit the street I walked faster, then ran. I fumbled the lock on my bike, hopped on, and peddled away as fast as my thirteen-year-old legs could.

I was not ready for this. This disappointment. I thought about my meaningless kiss with Paul, and now this.

When I got home I didn't want to go in my own room. When the tiger phone rang I tried to ignore it, but it wouldn't stop. I hung out with my mom in the kitchen. I spoke to her with genuine interest for possibly the first time all year—about anything but that. I would never tell her about Ron. I wanted her to believe and to convince her I was still thirteen inside. But I felt older that day. From downstairs I could hear it ringing. I never answered. The phone rang and rang.

—Ayn Imperato



AYN IMPERATO





It is ironic that, for all of its talk of freedom, democracy, and self-determination for all, the Bush administration has shown reluctance in allowing other countries to exercise the concepts it champions.

POSTCARDS FROM THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION



The Mother of all Hangovers

My wife, Karla, and I spent election night 2004 in college classes. As we turned the Reseda/Nordhoff corner near school, we saw Bush supporters and Kerry supporters—many of them college students—staking out adjacent corners, yelling at each other, trying to get people to honk in support of their respective candidates and generally celebrating what was probably for many of them their first active participation in the American election process. The radio had been reporting almost since the polls opened that a variety of problems had manifested at polling places across the country—inordinately long lines in heavily minority and/or democratic precincts; widespread electronic voting machine malfunctions, including computers that gave votes to Bush no matter for whom the vote was cast; and, in apparent homage to the 2000 election, another round of questionable voter purge lists in Florida. The alternative press later reported notable discrepancies between exit polls and the counts in precincts that had utilized electronic voting devices. On this election night, however, hope was clearly visible on the faces of both sets of people lining the corner.

I had seen a similar zeal in Karla's eyes four years earlier. I thought of the new-citizen optimism my then-girlfriend had that last election as she voted for the first time, after twenty years of residency. I thought of her belief then that her vote mattered, that it was a privilege and duty for which she reluctantly gave up her Nicaraguan citizenship. She wrote an article about it in the *LA Times Magazine* back then, describing the implications of becoming a naturalized citizen of a country that had annihilated the hopes of her homeland. The magazine received a few angry letters, attacking this foreigner who had the audacity to feel anything other than blind allegiance for her new country. I was proud of her because she had bucked the voting trend that seemed to be the norm for voters our age and younger. Instead of raising an apathetic middle finger to the entire electoral

process, she wanted to participate. We watched the results that night, marveling at the drama of one of the closest presidential races in American history unfolding, and wondering aloud how someone as incredibly inept as Bush was able to garner enough popularity to have even the slightest chance of winning.

As it became clear that, through a variety of means, he had managed to do what seemed to happen only in other countries—rigging the election—I saw Karla's optimism melt first into shock, then to disillusionment, with the entire process. She talked about it ultimately being no different than where she came from, of how similar tactics—preventing access to the polls, voter intimidation, creative counting methods—were standard operational procedure there, before and after the revolution. She added that the election results shouldn't surprise us, since the Bush family had perfected their election tampering skills in Latin American countries. As jaded as she seemed, though, the truth was that she didn't think it could happen here.

It literally seemed like a dark cloud had descended on the country and, as I later watched Bush's limo being pelted with eggs as he rode to claim his inaugural spoils, I was reminded of so many hangovers I had subjected myself to for so many years—the queasy feeling that refused to go away, the overall sense of impending doom. This, however, felt like the mother of all hangovers, one that was being felt by millions of others besides me, one that was going to take more than a Tecate and a bowl of menudo to fix.

Still, despite the experience four years ago, we both got up early this election day and headed to the polls to vote, hoping for the best and expecting the worst. As expected, the same tricks used in the last election were used again, eliciting the same result. I looked at Karla sitting on our couch and watching Kerry concede, disillusioned again—albeit not as severely as four years ago—and amazed that, after four years of outright lies, unnecessary war, recession, massive national debt, the PATRIOT Act, tortured prisoners, violations of almost every line of the Bill of Rights, and a total mangling of the English language, George Bush had again taken the election, amazingly coming off as more “moral” than his opponent. As I looked at her, I remembered those college kids we had seen the night before. I hoped that they, like Karla, would not be discouraged by what had happened over

the last twenty-four hours, and would be there to take up the fight again in four years.

Lunching in DMZ-Land

I dreamt about war the weekend before Christmas. The streets were littered with K-rails (those big concrete blocks they use to barricade streets) and people were running helter-skelter to avoid advancing tanks. Distant fighters strafed unseen targets and stealth bombers laid waste to houses dotting the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. It was so vivid it took a moment for me to realize when I awoke that I had been sleeping.

Later that morning, Karla and I had an early lunch with her brother David, who was visiting from Nicaragua. Both had lived through that country's revolution in the late '70s, which resulted in the deposition of the last in a long line of U.S. puppet dictators surnamed Somoza and the Sandinista government becoming the country's ruling power. Karla had often spoke of the things she had seen as a six-year-old child living in the midst of a nation coming apart at its seams—bodies piled up and hauled away in military trucks to common graves, stray bullets whizzing above her through a window, the bomb crater in their home, tanks.

While they did speak of that war, more of the morning's conversation concentrated on post-revolutionary Nicaragua, a place Karla left three months after Somoza fell and hasn't returned to since. David spoke of a country where the promise of revolution gave way to the combined reality of political corruption, years of crippling economic sanctions and the effects of a covert war with the “contras,” a counter-revolutionary army funded and trained by the United States.

When the conversation turned to the controversy surrounding the recent U.S. elections, David recounted working on Nicaragua's 1990 election, one he described as rife with tampering. Among other things, ballots would turn up missing, he said, only to be found later scattered on the streets, and it couldn't be determined if the ballots had already been counted or stolen beforehand. Bush Sr.'s administration did its part to sway the elections as well, openly endorsing candidate Violeta Chamorro, funneling millions of dollars in “aid” for the elections and, according to Joe DeRaymond's article,

"Democracy in El Salvador," threatening that the "the [Nicaraguan] economy would continue to be ravaged if they kept the Sandinistas in power." Ultimately, though, the ousting of the Sandinistas and the election of Chamorro was a grudge vote, he said, because the Sandinistas had reinstated conscription (mandatory enrollment for national service) and the country was tired after a decade of perpetual war. Several Sandinista leaders responded to the loss, to quote writer Jon Cloke, by stealing "everything that wasn't nailed down," including prime housing and land. Not that such nonsense was solely a Sandinista trait, for each subsequent presidential administration (not to mention nearly a century of U.S.-backed Somoza administrations) has been accused of rampant corruption.

Constant in recent Nicaraguan politics has been the Bush-family's presence in them. In addition to the Reagan/Bush administrations' open hostility toward the Sandinista government and their not-so-covert support for the contras, the current Bush Administration directly pressured Nicaragua's conservative party during the 2001 elections to withdraw its candidate to ensure stronger support for the one chosen by the U.S., again provided \$5.6 million to "assist" in the elections, and, according to British newspaper *The Guardian*, U.S. State Department spokesman Lino Guzman "made it clear in a barely coded address to the American chamber of commerce in Managua that the U.S. would not look kindly on the Sandinistas' re-emergence," inferring that the U.S. would revert to a 1980s stance toward Nicaragua and wreak havoc on its economy by again imposing sanctions should the Sandinistas win.

Florida governor Jeb Bush even took out a full-page ad in Nicaraguan paper *La Prensa* to say his brother George supported right-wing candidate Enrique Bolaños and that "[former Nicaraguan president and Sandinista candidate] Daniel Ortega is an enemy of everything the United States represents. Further, he is a friend of our enemies. Ortega has a relationship of more than thirty years with states and individuals who shelter and condone international terrorism." With regards to the voting itself, problems arose with the computers used to count the ballots.

A similar problem with computerized voting systems would come into play in the U.S. presidential election this past November, and the reports of democrat voter forms being tossed into the trash by republicans at voter registration events, the placement of Bush campaign leaders to oversee the election process in key states, more than one inference that the election of

that weekend. When the U.S. delegates at its "diplomatic mission" in Havana (so named because the U.S. and Cuba have no diplomatic relations and, thus, there is no U.S. official consulate in Cuba) put up Christmas lights with the number "75" in the middle to highlight the number of political dissidents the Cuban government had imprisoned, the Cubans demanded that the offending display be removed. When the U.S. diplomats refused, the Cubans responded by erecting a display of its own in front of the mission—a billboard with images of prisoners tortured by the U.S. military at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, a swastika, a "made in the U.S.A." stamp, and the word "fascist" figuring prominently. Leave it to Castro to make a point even U.S. democrats are reluctant to make.

These topics peppered our conversation that morning. I looked at our surroundings and marveled at the juxtaposition—I was sitting with two people, who as children had watched their country implode, eating lunch and talking of past and current elections, Castro, and overt hypocrisy in U.S. foreign policy at one of the biggest symbols of American imperialism: Downtown Disney.

My father, a Korean War veteran and simultaneously patriotic citizen and fierce government critic, taught me that the greatest thing about America was the freedom to openly disagree with the government's actions. Until recently, I have always felt comfortable doing just that, be it via participating in political demonstrations, writing articles, or playing in a punk band. People got killed for comparable actions where Karla and David came from. Yet, after the erosion of so many civil liberties, after so many quasi-fascist speeches peppered with

religious paraphrases like "Either you're with us or you're with the terrorists," after so many horror stories of people disappearing for merely *looking* like someone who *could* be related to someone who *might* be associated with shady people, I could not help but feel paranoid as we sat in "the happiest place on earth," speaking of things that could realistically result in a concerned citizen calling the FBI or Operation Tips to report three suspicious foreigners. I wondered if this was how dissenters felt as they sat in Berlin's cafés before Hitler really got his groove going.

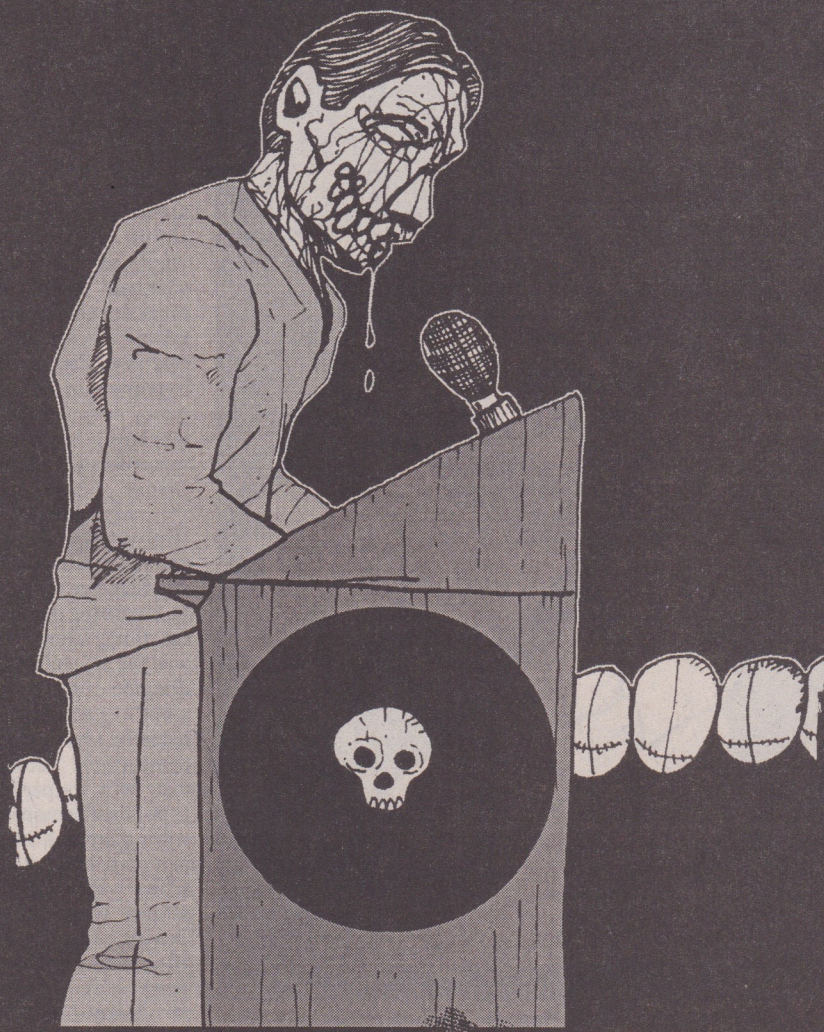


Illustrations by Keith Rosson - www.keithrosson.com

opponent John Kerry would result in more terrorist attacks on the U.S., and employing a variety of means to minimize minority voting demonstrates that the Bush administration has learned well from previous experiments in election tampering in Nicaragua and elsewhere.

It is ironic that, for all of its talk of freedom, democracy, and self-determination for all, the Bush administration has shown reluctance in allowing other countries to exercise the concepts it champions. Some U.S. actions in Iraq even run in direct opposition to those concepts, a point made glaring by the Cuban government

This, however, felt like the mother of all hangovers, one that was being felt by millions of others besides me, one that was going to take more than a Tecate and a bowl of menudo to fix.



As we left, I noticed that some sections of street leading into Downtown Disney had been cordoned off with K-rails, like some parody of a demilitarized zone.

Fighters, Floats and Fascists

Karla and I found ourselves in Pasadena two weeks later, watching the Rose Parade from the front yard of one of her business clients. On the street in front of us stood the first float, a massive knight

astride an equally massive steed, his arm outstretched with sword pointed forward. From the float came Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyrie," made famous as the song used to "scare the shit outta the gooks" in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. As it stood there, belching from its insides this classical piece written by Hitler's favorite composer/anti-Semite and waiting to conquer Colorado Boulevard, a stealth bomber, the jewel of the military's arsenal, soared directly over us and the float and headed off toward the San Gabriel mountains. The crowd around us

was effectively shocked and awed. I was unnerved at the remembrance of my dream of two weeks earlier.

A lot has happened since New Year's morning. In addition to claiming his reelection as a political carte blanche to do whatever he feels, Bush says that the time to hold anyone accountable for mistakes with regards to his war on Iraq has passed. "We had a time for accountability," he has proclaimed, "and it was called the 2004 elections."

The senate has confirmed Condoleezza Rice, one of Bush's chief liars and co-conspirators in his war of empire, to the cabinet position of secretary of state. They are expected to confirm Alberto Gonzalez, who Bush described in a CNN article as a man who "has an unwavering principle of respect for the law," for the position of attorney general. While acting as counsel when Bush was governor of Texas, Gonzalez provided fifty-seven memos that were often little more than briefs citing the case for execution, rather than balanced summaries providing both arguments regarding cases of death row prisoners seeking clemency from the governor. As chief White House counsel, he was the person responsible for stonewalling any probes into Vice-President Cheney's secret meetings with energy corporations, and provided the administration with arguments that it had the right to bypass the Geneva Conventions (which he deemed "quaint") and anti-torture laws regarding prisoners of war, paving the way for the detention and treatment of prisoners at places like Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. Republicans are using Gonzalez' ethnic background to their advantage, rightfully thinking their opposition is afraid to risk being tagged as racists unwilling to let a Mexican of humble beginnings become the first Hispanic in history elected to a cabinet position. Rice and Gonzalez replacing Colin Powell—who lied both to his superiors in the '60s about evidence of massacres in Vietnam and to the UN about evidence about Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction"—and John Ashcroft, champion of the PATRIOT Act and ultra-right Jesus freak so reviled in his own state that he lost his senate seat to a dead man, leaves one to wonder which is the lesser of two evils in this case.

On a whim, I looked up "conservatism" on MSN's Encarta Encyclopedia, which defined it as, "a general state of mind that is averse to rapid change and innovation and strives for balance and order, while avoiding extremes." Didn't quite seem to fit the Bush administration, so I looked up "fascism." It gives a lot of history of the political concept, its origins and such, but two things struck me as interesting: 1) fascist groups don't necessarily have to be racist; 2) although they may vary, "all forms of fascism have three common features: anti-conservatism, a myth of ethnic or national renewal, and a conception of a nation in crisis."

With regards to "anti-conservatism," while fascist movements supposedly strive to retain some of the nation's better features, they are actually more interested in creating "a new type of total culture in which values, politics, art, social norms, and economic activity are all part of a single organic national community." The so-called neoconservative movement, which the Bush administration heads, has demonstrated a desire to radically change the cultural face of America by altering or eradicating a number

of its traditions, some dating from the country's inception. Some of their efforts include erasing the separation between church and state, subverting the Constitution, doing their best to eradicate social service programs and other symbols of "big government" while ramping up the military, and giving a series of breaks to the country's richest few at the expense of the rest of the population. Although they claim to aspire to an idealized America of yore, their ultimate goal is a new society shaped by a radical strain of Christian fundamentalism, and they wish to propagate it via the media, the arts, "faith-based" programs, and the military.

Although they seek revolutionary change, fascist movements place emphasis on "a myth of ethnic or national renewal," harkening back to some perceived golden era in the nation's past that has been destroyed by deviant elements in the society, such as race mixing or a loss of national identity. "Because fascist ideologies place great value on creating a renewed and unified national or ethnic community," according to Encarta, "they are hostile to most other ideologies. In addition to rejecting conservatism, fascist movements also oppose such doctrines as liber-

alism, individualism, materialism, and communism. In general, fascists stand against all scientific, economic, religious, academic, cultural, and leisure activities that do not serve their vision of national political life." Having long lamented the erosion of America's moral, religious and empirical past, neoconservatives and their allies in the religious right have chosen to flex their newfound political clout by waging war on anything and anyone that runs contrary to their social agenda. One need look no further than the skewed sense of "patriotism" they promulgate—anyone who does not buy wholly into their agenda is branded a traitor—or their attacks on immigration, women's rights, evolution, prayer in school, critics of their policies, homosexuality, the arts, liberals, former allied countries, freedom of speech, characters on children's shows, and even former members of their own ranks for evidence of this.

Lastly, fascists believe that their nation is in crisis, that it "has entered a dangerous age of mediocrity, weakness, and decline. They are convinced that through their timely action they can save the nation from itself. Fascists may assert the need to take drastic action against a nation's 'inner'

enemies. Fascists promise that with their help the national crisis will end and a new age will begin that restores the people to a sense of belonging, purpose, and greatness." With the help of the corporate media (as well as paid journalists and, as evidenced by the Jeff Gannon/Talon News debacle, even fake ones), the Bush administration has gone to great lengths to trumpet the weakness and vulnerability of the U.S. after eight years under lax democratic rule, and believes that only through its strengthening of the military, a rollback of civil liberties, exploitation of other countries and their natural resources, the total eradication of all enemies foreign and domestic, and the indoctrination of rest of the world, either by economic or military force, to their brand of democracy, and a steady stream of bald-faced lies, will the United States be safe, maintain its military and economic superiority and realize its dream of "a new American century." And it appears they're only just getting started. While some might believe that fascism died along with Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco, it's becoming apparent that it might have only dropped the "racial superiority" mumbo-jumbo, changed continents, and co-opted its enemy's flag.

What has transpired at the hands of the Bush administration is a new American revolution. It is a cultural revolution led by a demagogue with messianic delusions who has surrounded himself with some of the most morally bankrupt individuals ever to hold office, and the whole lot of them truly believe their cause is just and will let nothing stand in their way of taking over the minds, and the economic resources, of the rest of the world.

I believe in the power of dreams, even bad ones, to sometimes come true. As I watched Bush's limousine pelted with eggs as it carried him to once again claim his inaugural spoils, I thought of how much the country had changed due to his actions, and not those of the dreaded bogeyman "terrorists" he invokes to frighten the population into submission. Shuddering at the endless possibilities of ridiculous extremes he may manage to push his so-called "mandate" during his new term, I found myself wondering whether, despite all the talk of freedom and democracy for the world, we may find over the next four years that we are not be as far removed from 1930s Europe as we'd like to think.

—Jimmy Alvarado



THE GENERATORS

Excess Betrayal...and our Dearly Departed

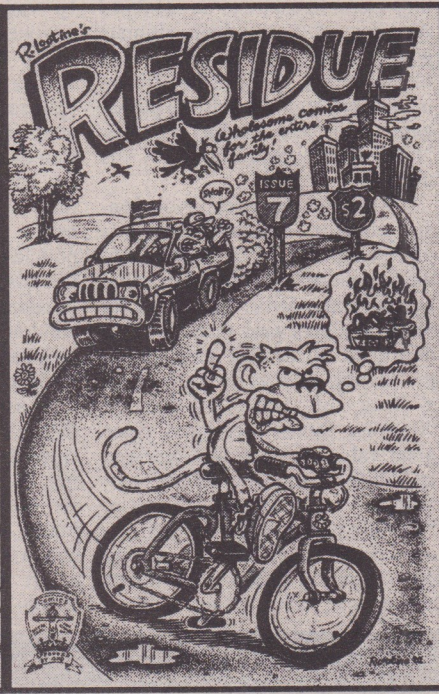
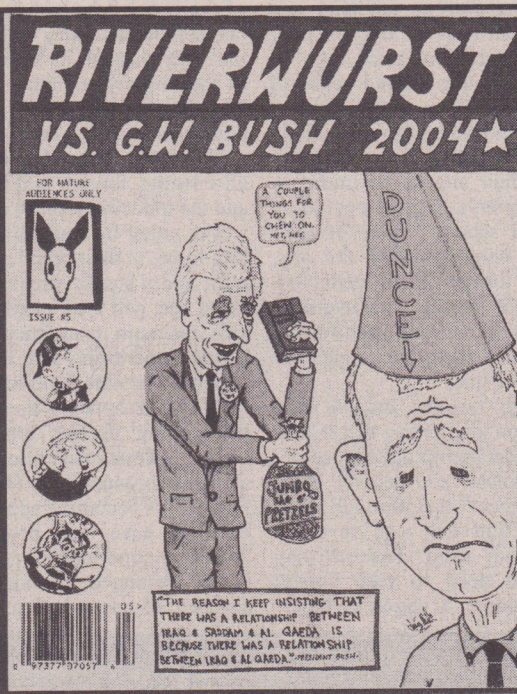
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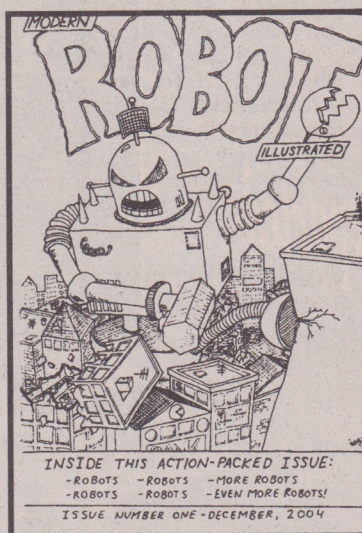


THIS IS THE STORY OF A FAMILY OF SISTERS SO SEXUALLY DRAWN THAT IT FORCES COOP TO WORK OVERTIME.

GARY HORNBERGER

Well, now that the holidays are over, I can sigh and look back and ponder the strange Christmas card I received from Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez. It seems that the congresswoman is looking for a career in adult entertainment if she's not reelected next term. I would also like to know what part of the card the watchdog group P.E.T.A. is going to attack. Will it be the hot red leather jacket, the black leather pants (growwwlll), or the fact that her cat's tail is on fire? There is, of course, a disclaimer on the inside that no cats were harmed during the making of the card. Is it just me or are those Democrats a fun-loving bunch? Now that I've shared that with all of you, I can throw this card out.

Now here's my beef this issue: is the term "made in America" worth its weight? One of the many gripes I have at work while putting products on the shelf is that when I rip into a case of yogurt, I find that many of the containers are split open. This isn't the RAZORCAKE 18 box that some lazy



warehouse worker lughead placed on the pallet under cases of gallon-sized juice, either. No, this is because Yoplait or Dannon decided that the plastic container used to house your key lime yogurt needed to be just thin enough to get it home before it leaked out everywhere, yet just about every other case has two

or three busted out of twelve. Are they really saving money by being a cheap American company?

Well, if you remember the Pinto, Ford's misguided monster of an auto, there were studies done on which would cost more: a total recall of the auto or shelling out some money for a few exploding

gas tanks. It's not just in the plastic on a yogurt either; it's in the flimsier cardboard case, the cheap glue to hold the case together, and so on. Now take that same mentality and put it into your American-made auto, your medical devices, and many other products that are mass-made that are critical to your well being. No wonder there is a neurosis out there that someone is secretly looking to get you.

Apparently, humans are disposable also. Here's the scenario: they need people to buy their product, yet they don't care too much if someone gets hurt or dies, because apparently we can replace the population, too. That's truly American-made! Don't get me wrong—it angers me greatly to see people gripe about the economy and then jump into their foreign automobile. I try my hardest to buy products that are made in the USA, which are getting more and more rare, but I do find it necessary to question the reckless manufacturing to make a few more dollars on the already billions in profit.

Here's another somewhat

humorous story. A guy at work drives a 1970 Chevelle (chick magnet?) and his dad wants him to sell it. With that money and some help from dad, he plans on getting a brand new car. The dad then asks what kind of car he wants. The reply is a new Silverado, a full-size truck. Access denied. "You don't want to buy an American-made car. They break down." What does his dad drive? Mercedes! Well, thanks for keeping us Germans in the money.

By no means am I a workaholic, but when I do my work, I do it right and maybe that's my American way, but I'm not pulling punches, taking shortcuts, or asking for my share of the profits. When did we decide that the best thing we could bestow to the next generation is to cut corners and get as much green as possible? That way of thinking just doesn't work.

LOVERS AND HECTOR

\$3.50 U.S., \$5.25 Can.

Straight from the pages of *Luba*. Oh, you don't remember *Luba*? Then how about straight from the pages of *Love and Rockets*? This is the story of a family of sisters so sexually drawn that it forces Coop to work overtime. This comic pretty much concentrates on the lovers of these women. Hector is the pot-smoking lover of Petra, the curvy muscle-bound sister, and is plagued with forgetfulness as he goes out to find one of the sisters at a bar. Throughout the night, we meet the other characters/sexual partners in this sexual soap opera of a comic. Most of the time when these come through, I just flip through the pages start to finish before I even read them because the visual tells most of the story. So if you're feeling deviant next time you're in the comic shop, pick this one up. (Luba's Comics and Stories, Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115)

RESIDUE

By R. Lootine
\$2.00 U.S.

Remember that American way I was talking about? This comic is it. A monkey, a dog, a roach, Christ, and a pig put it all together for this critique of America's current affairs. This comic is chock full of political and social satire, and I love it. My favorite is the girl who claims, "At first, I was all like, no way! Computers are totally gay trekkie toys for geeks, but now they have pink ones." The re-do of the terrorist threat ranking is side splitting too. It seems that if you put animals in today's political climate, things become more palatable. The pigs do represent law

enforcement, and since I ride a bike, I found the "moving violation" strip most enjoyable. Just the cover alone incites a riot of laughter; come on, a monkey on a bike flippin' the bird to a pig in his big ole Suburban is outstanding. Now if you can't find this little gem at your comic book store, Mr. Lootine displays his works in *Pulse Magazine*. Whatever you do, you must find a copy of this man's work. It will brighten your day and send you back into the sunlight. (R. Lootine, PO Box 580848, Minneapolis, MN 55458)

MODERN ROBOT ILLUSTRATED

By Dug Belan
\$1.00 ppd. U.S.

Is *Modern Robot* a comic or is it a catalog? I still don't know. It is basically pages and pages of different robots. At first I didn't think much about it, good or bad, but now it sort of makes me chuckle. I mean, did we ever really think that we could get a robot to brush our teeth or wipe our asses? Well, both of those models are in here. The Robo-brush and the Cyberwipe are just the wave of the future. No wonder there are so many sci-fi movies about when robots replace humans. One, we will get fat and immobile from the lack of exercise in our arms from no longer wiping our asses, and two, they'll get us from behind when we get bent over for our cleaning. See, the more I think of these robots, the funnier the situations become. Of course, the robot on the cover is bringing destruction to a city, but the models inside are all helpful... or are they? Look at it this way: where else are you going to find a laugh about a robot for a buck? (Dug Belan, 707 E. Wright St. Milwaukee, WI 53212)

BLOOD ORANGE #3

Collection of artists
\$5.95 U.S., \$9.55 Can.

All I can say is stay away from this issue. Liked #2, but this one is too far out. Sort of like looking at bad art and saying, "This piece is about world hunger and the fragile political structure keeping the food for the rich" when it's just a bunch of squiggly lines. (Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115)

RIVERWURST #5

Collection of writers
\$3.00 U.S., \$4.00 Can.

Best collection of comics and stories, bar none! This issue is even better because it's themed for G.W. Bush. The satire in this magazine is gut-busting. Every page turned is humor-filled. It's an adult's version of *Mad Magazine*; I keep

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expecting to fold the final page to expose the good old honest truth behind something in the world today. I was upset to learn that *Riverwurst* is going on a year-long hiatus, so you all should start sending checks to get back issues because I own three copies and every one makes me giggle like a little school girl. Yes, with the plaid skirt, you sicko. There is so much packed into these gems that it's hard to pick a favorite strip, so just take my word for it. (Riverwurst, PO Box 511553, Milwaukee, WI 53203, teakrulos@hotmail.com)

WORN TUFF ELBOW #1

By Marc Bell
\$4.95 U.S.

Size does not matter in Bagtown because the mixed-up creatures, from mini-sausage-looking characters and deformed creatures, lie everywhere. They resemble the creatures from *The Yellow Submarine*, only in black and white. The story is hard to follow because some creatures speak in tongues and others are straightforward so that you don't know where one piece of information links to another. The only thing I did pick up is that one rich dick runs the town and has his hands dirty in everything; other than that, I can only say this comic is for the twist-

ed. (Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115)

2SISTERS

by Matt Kindt
\$19.95 U.S.

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-Gary Hornberger



RAZORCAKE 19

GARY HORNBERGER



NARDWUAR

WHO ARE YOU?

Timothy Leary: Where do you get these questions? Do you have committees of monkeys?

Nardwuar the Human Serviette vs. Dr. Timothy Leary

Interview done in person, January 15, 1994, AMS Program's Office, SUB Building, University Of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Photo by Lincoln Clarkes

Nardwuar: So Dr. Leary, the news in Washington is: "There is no news." What is the news now, from Timothy Leary?

Timothy Leary: Ooh, wow, that is a complicated question! [laughs] Um, we are approaching the 21st century. It is going to... everybody knows that the old systems are over... communism and... everybody knows it... Everybody knows that every politician is corrupt and are interested in only one thing... umm... himself. And there is a global sense of sorrow and grief, because we hate to lose our ideals. But then, at the turn of the century, a new species will be born. It is going to be born... It is a global language which will be—I know it sounds funny when I say this—based on Nintendo, and the Nintendo kids will suddenly be sending history and religion.

Sarah from the band Kreviss: That sounds scary!

Timothy Leary: Well, you can be scared if you want, but if you want the old way, you can go back. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Are you the Hugh Hefner of LSD?

Timothy Leary: Now that is the dumbest question... Who's got the award? Who's got the award? [laughs] I want to congratulate you. I have been interviewed thousands of times and I have met the greatest

professional [laughs] crazed interviewers, and you're right up there. [laughs] You're the Joe Montana, right?

Nardwuar: I'm Nardwuar the Human Serviette, Timothy Leary.

Timothy Leary: You sure are. I'm not going to argue with that!

Nardwuar: Is going through life without a psychedelic experience like going through life without a sexual experience?

Timothy Leary: Well, I'd hate to have either way of life. People ask me how many times have I taken LSD. Now, I've been experimenting with the brain for like forty years. I say, it's like how many times have I made love. I don't count like Wilt Chamberlain the basketball player, but there's one thing I know: not enough! Not enough!

Nardwuar: When was the last time you were busted?

Timothy Leary: Oh, about seven or eight years ago.

Nardwuar: Did you really meet Charles Manson in prison, Timothy Leary, and did he really supply you with some hallucinogenics, i.e. marijuana?

Timothy Leary: No, I was in the same cell next to Manson for one night. Legends have developed about that. He did not give me any drugs. I would never take any drugs from anyone who does not have the qualities in their eye that I want from that drug. So I would never take drugs from Manson. This is Tim's Tips to the Young, okay? [laughs] Don't take drugs from Manson!

Nardwuar: How about Elvis?

Timothy Leary: What about Elvis?

Nardwuar: Did you ever meet Elvis, Gilligan, or Frank Sinatra?

Timothy Leary: I met Frank Sinatra, who is a very suave and courteous mafioso. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Would Brian Wilson be the same today if he didn't do LSD in the '60s?

Timothy Leary: Well, I'm a kindly man and I try to say nothing negative about anyone, but I have always considered Brian Wilson to be a pathetic moron. It is not his fault. The DNA, you know... They have to have morons out there, you know. I don't think that he is a child molester or anything evil, but he is just plain... his elevator doesn't reach the top floor.

Nardwuar: Speaking about children, are you related to Winona Ryder or Uma Thurman at all?

Timothy Leary: Last night, I had the pleasure of being in Winona Ryder's home in Beverly Hills. We were watching her big screen, her winning the award for Best Supporting Actress in *Days of Innocence*. Her young brother was with her, and I was sitting next to David Pirner, the rock and roller from Soul Asylum. So, yes I am very, very close to Winona. I think she is a brilliant, brilliant person. Uma Thurman's mother was my wife. We first met... I was on a honeymoon with Uma Thurman's mother when I met you in Calcutta [pointing to an old Indian guru acquaintance of Leary's]. She was a tall blonde woman. She is the mother of a famous actress now.

Nardwuar: Did JFK, Timothy Leary, ever do acid?

Timothy Leary: I don't know. They say he did.

Nardwuar: But you dropped acid with Marilyn Monroe.

Timothy Leary: No comment.

Nardwuar: Have you ever made money off your work?

Timothy Leary: I have ended every month in my life in the hole. I have lived basically... You wouldn't believe the debts I have. I basically live on the largesse and compassion of my friends. I work my ass off, but I knew that. It is the job of a philosopher, particularly a Socratic philosopher who teaches young people and corrupts their minds by telling them to think for

themselves. It is a hard job. Someone has to do it... badly paid... can be dangerous to your health.

Nardwuar: Is there a patent for acid? Is somebody actually making money off it?

Timothy Leary: I don't know much about details. I don't think they're making much money. I'm not into chemistry and finance.

Nardwuar: How does it make you feel that more young people are doing acid today than ever before?

Timothy Leary: Well, I don't think around at night, you know, tossing and turning on my pillow. There are a million other things happening, and again, what does that mean: acid? Because the government's policy of restriction, the government does not regulate or help you know what acid is. Nobody knows what acid is. My advice is: do not go out and get acid from someone who goes up to you in a trench coat in a bar and says, "Hey, here is some acid!" Like anything else that is precious in life, you should know what you are doing, and if you're going to share this experience, do it with someone who shares your spiritual ambitions and when you look in their eye, they have the same holiness that you're looking for.

Nardwuar: Do you still have a mind-blowing experience once a week?

Timothy Leary: I'm having one right now! [laughs] I tell you! To be locked up in a cell with you! [laughs]

Nardwuar: Are you on any drugs right now Timothy Leary?

Timothy Leary: Coffee. Coffee.

Nardwuar: Is Prozac the legal LSD of the '90s?

Timothy Leary: [laughs] Where do you get these questions? Do you have committees of monkeys? I'm not an expert on legal drugs... basically don't like legal drugs. Think about it. If a government legalizes a drug, there's got to be something



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Photo by Lincoln Clarkes

Timothy Leary: Listen, I'm so senile, I don't remember what was going on last night at this time, so let's get easy...

wrong with it. Think about it: alcohol, things like that...

Nardwuar: Didn't you design some rides for Disneyland?

Timothy Leary: But to go back to Prozac here, uh, I'm fascinated that they are learning more about the brain. Because the brain is a series of one-hundred billion computers, and we're learning how to "punch up" and "boot up" and "format" and yes, I think it's wonderful, if true, that a person who is terribly depressed would not need to go to a doctor. I don't think you should have to go to a doctor. You should be able to go to a committee, or your friends, or so forth. Yes, I think it's wonderful that there are these chemicals that obviously are designed by DNA to make the brain react this way. So basically, although I am not giving product endorsements about Prozac, I think, in general, the idea is good. But of course, the doctors are now running around and making billions off it, naturally, and I think that any psychoactive, psychedelic, psychological drug should not be sold. It's like selling pardons, you know. The priests used to do that, selling sacraments. I think that they should be regulated by society, uh, certainly young people shouldn't use them, but the very idea of selling psychoactive drugs is worse than prostitution, in a sense. And uh, I haven't thought this quite through, so—

Nardwuar: Sounds good so far!

Timothy Leary: —Be gentle with me. [laughs] Listen, let's take a break here for a minute, and I'll ask you some questions.

Nardwuar: Okay, sure.

Timothy Leary: How long can you stay quiet? [laughs]

Nardwuar: Didn't you once design some rides for Disneyland though? Weren't you once called upon to consult for that at all, Timothy Leary?

Timothy Leary: No, it would never happen.

Nardwuar: Didn't the Johnny Appleseeds of LSD live in Vancouver? What are your memories of Vancouver in the 1960s?

Timothy Leary: Listen, I'm so senile, I don't remember what was going on last night at this time, so let's get easy...

[Interview resumes five hours later after Dr. Leary's lecture, "How to Operate Your Brain"]

Timothy Leary: What is your name?

Nardwuar: Nardwuar.

Timothy Leary: What does it mean in English?

Nardwuar: It's like Sting in English.

Timothy Leary: Buzzzzzzzz. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Timothy Leary, is G. Gordon Liddy the anti-Timothy Leary?

Timothy Leary: No. He has a million [burps] characteristic personalities... I have a million characteristic personalities. Maybe fifty thou-

sand of them are different. What is this bullshit about "anti"? Anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-devil? There is no such thing as anti-Timothy Leary. You're betraying a feudal, if not worse, theology here: the anti-Timothy Leary. [growls] Arrrgg! I will get him and I will put him on a fucking cross and put a sword through his side and I will make him a crown of thorns, baby. Yeah, he's anti! Are you a born Christian?

Nardwuar: I think they splattered some water on me but I actually pray to a lucky chestnut. But reading from a quote from *Newsweek Magazine* dated 1968, Dr. Timothy Leary, "The work of the psychedelic—"

Timothy Leary: 1968? Well for Christ's sakes, I did... The person who is here now: I have almost no relationship to that person.

Nardwuar: Right. This is tying into all of that. "The work of the psychedelic scholar-politician is over. With love and confidence, we turn our work and our planet over to the young and their prophets." Along with Psychic TV, who would this circle of '90s prophets comprise of?

Timothy Leary: Who is Psychic TV?

Nardwuar: Genesis P. Orridge. Didn't you do some work with him?

Timothy Leary: I know, but why did you drag him in?

Nardwuar: Is he not a '70s prophet of Timothy Leary?

Timothy Leary: Now we're getting into prophets! [laughs] I've got an anti-Christ in Liddy and a prophet in Genesis! Genesis is a very talented northern English guy who had a great moment in England when he started Throbbing Gristle. He used his children a lot in naked stuff. Did you know that? So he's... no, he's not the Timothy Leary of the '90s. He's a nice guy, but um...

Nardwuar: Who is?

Timothy Leary: Ummm... the concept of "is," the anti-Christ, the anti-this, and "who's that" and all that. This is very primitive thinking.

Nardwuar: Okay, here's something simple, finally winding up here, Timothy Leary. Do the guys with LSD get the most chicks?

Timothy Leary: [pause] The vulgar sordidness of that question is Olympic. "Getting chicks." I mean, what does that mean: "getting chicks?" That is a very vulgar '50s term. Man, you are out of it! You really are out of it!

Nardwuar: Alright, thanks very much Timothy Leary, and doot doola doot doo...

Timothy Leary: Me too!!! [laughs]

—Nardwuar

To hear this interview hop to <http://www.nardwuar.com>

NARDWUAR

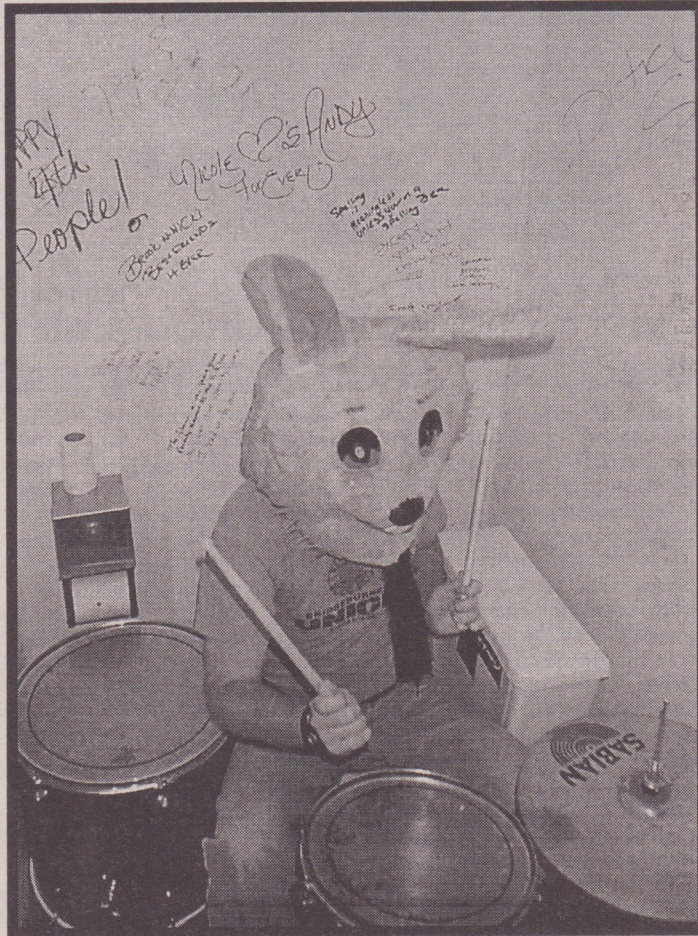




THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

The toilet and water faucet did their take on "dueling banjos" while the crowd grew anxious. This was truly a chorus of angels!

Okay, back up. In and around the early '90s I found myself sitting in my bedroom through **RAZORCAKE 24** most winter storms recording



So, back to 2005. About ten days after receiving that healthy twelve-inch powdery onslaught, we got another eighteen inches over the course of a weekend. I woke up and shoveled

About half an hour later I had finished my creation. I shoveled all of the snow in my front yard onto one large pile in the middle, MOUNT RUCKUS! I had finished this grand monument, carried by the spirit of SNOWSHOVEL. Now,

finally, I felt I had deserved that beer. At 3:30 AM, after nearly twenty hours of shoveling snow, working my day job, and then shoveling snow again, I thought a January roadsit was long overdue! I ran indoors and grabbed some Lacrosse Lagers from the icebox and one large wooden chair from the living room. With my royal throne out by the road, in my freshly shoveled front yard, next to my newly created Mount Ruckus, I conducted my first January roadsit. A few cars actually passed by and saw me sitting out there at 3:30 AM in a horrible blizzard hoisting my beer skyward. One car honked and it was all worth it.

[Okay, Mr. Chicken. As your editor, I am going to have to recommend that you start your column over. This is a very nice story, yet I don't feel it is proper ranting for the pages of *Razorcake*. The only ruckus in that story is a motionless pile of snow. Is this really constructive punk rock journalism? I'm sorry, Chicken, but I'm pulling out my red pen on this one. —Dr. S.]

(Don't listen to him, Chicken! C'mon! What does a drunk mathematician know about punk rock journalism, anyway? And what kind of mathematician gets his degree from UW-Green Bay? I say keep it! Screw you, Sienarf! —F.F.)

[Excuse me, Francis. If you would please notice the header atop this column, you'll notice that I am indeed the functioning editor of this fine literary work. Me, Dr. Sienarf. —Dr. S.]

(Oh yeah?! Well, if that dumb header is what runs the show, then SO BE IT! — F.F.)

—Funyuns yinks away the Chicken's laptop and begins typing frantically—

The Dinghole Reports
By Francis Funyuns
(pointless commentary by the Rhythm Chicken)
[pompous whining by Dr. Sienarf!]

GOOD MORNING AMERICA! I'm here to show you how this is supposed to be done! This ain't no kinder gentler Dinghole Report! It's all about the ruckus! RUCKUS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dinghole Report #65: BACK TO THE RUCKUS!
(Rhythm Chicken sighting #325)

RUCKUS! RUCKUS! RUCKUS! Burn your mom! Eat the kids! Rape the dog! SMASH, CRASH, AND BALDERDASH! AAAAAAAAAAAH! RUCKUS!!! It was a cold October night in Green Bay. It had been YEARS since our hero returned to his hometown. His last Green Bay gig left the Concert Café in ruins! Green Bay was in desperate need of ruckus, and who better to heed the call? Three Milwaukee bands were playing this night at the Main Stage, a new venue on Main Street. The Mandates opened the show with our own Ruckus O'Reily on vocals and guitar! RUCKUS! Our hero, the Rhythm Chicken, was already inhaling Jake's pizza and soaking up the Pabst! GIVE HIM FUEL!!! Next up were the

Seahorses, whose bass player had the RC perform at his family reunion this past summer! They rocked the GB crowd into a frenzied ruckus! Meanwhile, RC's old friend the Chez showed up and helped him shove even more Pabst into his beak! Finally, the Reverse took the stage and unleashed their blend of garage rock ruckus. With the Reverse being in Green Bay that night, I just assume the Cactus Club back in Milwaukee had to close its doors to cut their losses! The Pabst was being consumed at a feverish pace! The ruckus needle was bouncing and diving into the red! The Main Stage felt a rumble as the first waves of Chicken ruckus were building up! The Chez assumed his roadie duty and helped load in the back door, straight to the LADIES' ROOM! This ladies' room was tighter than tight! One toilet, one sink, and loads of graffiti! Somehow, they managed to cram the



chicken kit into these impossible confines and then squeeze a Rhythm Chicken in there. As is Rhythm Chicken Ladies' Room Tradition, the toilet was his throne! His floor tom was squeezed behind his right buttock! His bass drum, snare, and hi-hat were duking it out for floor space next to the commode. No time was wasted as he crawled into the cockpit and began his terrible thunder! The opening drum roll heralded everyone from the bar back into the skinny hallway leading to the shitters. A wall of straining faces squeezed into the little doorway to witness Jesus returning to Bethlehem! The chaotic rhythms began and the back hallway was ROCKIN'!!! The gin-soaked rhythms flowed from the girlie-shitroom like molten hot ruckus!

[Again? —Dr. S.]

SILENCE!!! THIS IS RUCKUS!!! The rhythmic audio onslaught exploded from the tiny confines of the femalien privy! {{Okay, one quickie here. I'm REALLY impressed that this spellchecker recognizes the word privy! Okay, back to our story.}} The back hallway almost burst at the seams as the crowd throbbed and swelled to the maniacal Chicken Rhythms! Surely this was building up to something far grander than your normal pile of ruckus! Just then, the Rhythm Chicken took one of his patented breaks, lifted his wings, and accepted the deafening adoration from the hallway. This is when he pushed the carrot and pioneered into unforeseen musical territory! With his left wing he reached back and.....FLUSHED THE TOILET!!! A few crowd members in front hollered in approval. Most of them in back were asking, "What's going on?" Then someone yelled, "He's flushing the toilet!" The RC pounded out another few verses of chicken rock and raised his wings, then reached back for another toilet solo. FLUSH! The hallway erupted with cheers! Just then, a member of the Seahorses crawled over the crowd and reached into the femalien privy. His arm reached toward the sink, grabbed the water faucet and turned it on full blast! WHO DARES TO ATTEMPT AN UNWELCOMED DUET WITH THE RHYTHM CHICKEN? Our hero spun his crusty head around to see who could possibly make such a musical intrusion. ACK!!! There, at the other end of that daring arm was the face of... GREG STEFFKE! Wait... so that whole intro really WAS relevant?

—The Rhythm Chicken violently grabs the laptop back from Funyuns—

Yes! After more than ten years, this was the unforeseen reunion of SNOW-SHOVEL, and in of all places! The toilet and water faucet did their take on "dueling banjos" while the crowd grew anxious. This was truly a chorus of angels! FLUSH! TSSSSH! TSSSSH! FLUSH! TSSSH! TSSSSH! Unfortunately, there was no substantial recording equipment there to catch this historic moment in music history. Then I rolled out one more barrel of ruckus for the hallway full of rock gobblers. They ate it up and went home enlightened, their faces aglow.

So, the morning after my creation of Mount Ruckus I quickly ran outside to find another six inches of fresh snow atop my formerly shoveled front yard and Mount Ruckus was six inches taller. I ran out there with my camera to capture this golden calf on film, and it's a good thing I did. A few hours later I looked out my front window to see eight neighborhood kids climbing all over it, reducing it to the Ruins of Ruckus. In the next few days I plan on driving across Milwaukee to go past the home of my old friend Greg Steffke. If there's anything right and true in this world, there will be a similar Ruins of Ruckus in his front yard as well.

—Rhythm Chicken
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com





REV. NØRB

LOVE, NØRB

THEY ARE HOWL-LIKE IN THE SCOPE OF THEIR MAGNO-MAJESTY!!!

ARTSY FREE VERSE MUSINGS BY A WELL-COMPENSATED
HOLY MAN

or

NOBODY WALKS THE STREETS TONIGHT BUT ME! THE
MAGNETIC PUNK!

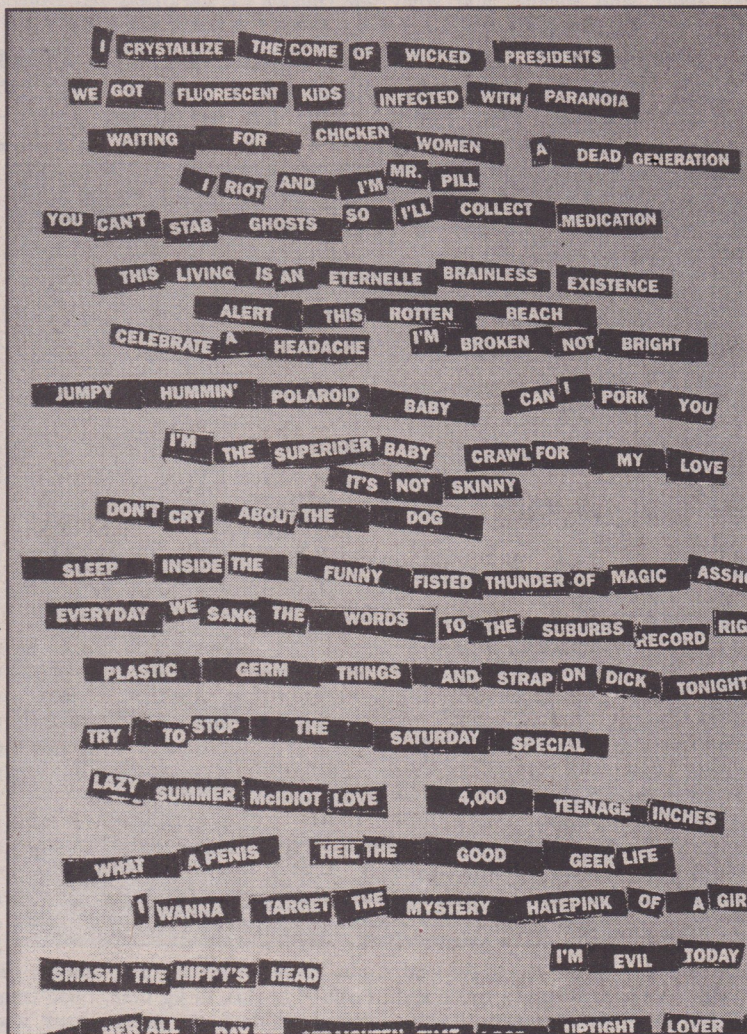
...but first, let us put the rumors to rest, the images in context, the Jacks back in their boxes, and the dirty dishes in the oven: I, Rev. Nørb, after untold centuries of steadfastly refusing to do The Devil's Work (i mean, after all, isn't that what God invented girls for?), am now a (metaphorically) card carrying Agent O' Satan. I have violated all that is natural and right in the world. I officiated at a wedding. *I'm a passive enabler! A shamanistic ne'er do well! An Injustice O' The Peace!* I, Rev. Nørb, without excuse borne of mind control drugs or alien brain-enslavement technologies, as of 12.31.04, at the persnickety behest of a close associate, did break with my long-held pattern of staunch refusal to inflict the bonds of holy matrimony on other living beings, and married former Boris the Sprinklerist Erik #1 to the lovely Mrs. Jane #1 under the colossal titanium bean-thing which looms large (for no apparent reason other than to perhaps attract gigantic, legume-crazed robots to the downtown area) in the middle of Millennium Park in Chicago (my guilt in performing such an undertaking somewhat mitigated by the soul-soothing joy i got when my rhetorical pulpit inquiry of "WHO LIVES IN A PINEAPPLE UNDER THE SEA?" was met with a lusty "SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS™!" by the congregation. If i ever perform another wedding ceremony—Beelzebub be praised—i'm hoping [in the name of Science] it'll be before a more augustly Catholic™ throng, so i can test out my theory that most folks in attendance would answer "WHO LIVES IN A PINEAPPLE UNDER THE SEA?" with "LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER" out of sheer muscle memory). The great thing was—apart from my pocketing a tidy five bucks worth of dare money—that, about five minutes into my Holy Spiel, people started going "HURRY IT UP! HURRY IT UP!" and i, very much used to this sort of thing from my days as a blathering punk rock singer and/or long-winded, ill-mindful-of-deadlines-and-or-spatial-constraints punk rock columnist, am thinking "oh yeah, great, AS USUAL. Before the ceremony, everybody's like 'yeah, Nørb! Do it! It'll be great! Do your thing, dude! We love you, man!', and, as soon as i start, everybody's like 'You're talking too much! You're taking too long! You're ruining Aunt Hettie's big day! You're ruining everything for everybody everywhere! We hate you, man!'"—but, little do i know that, on accounta we, as a brigade of renegade and rogue Outlandos D'Amour of primarily Cheesehead and Yooper (YU•per, n. *A resident of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, aka "U.P."*) ethnic stock, have predictably failed to grease the proper palms at Chicago City Hall and obtain the proper permits for our Holy Ceremony O' Fun, thus a cadre of Chicago's Finest are beginning to amass behind us, with intentions of forcing immediate Cease-and-Desistage upon our merry throng. Needless to say, having my spiffy purple vinyl top hat dented by some Chicago Robo-Dyke's combination Nightstick/Strap-On Swedish Love Gun was not high on my New Year's Eve to-do list, so, after leading the crowd in another round of quick communal alleluia (this time "MORE TWINKIES™, LESS MEATLOAF™!" in reference to Twinkies™ mating for life and thereby setting a good example for the newlyweds, as opposed to Meatloaf's song "Paradise By The Dashboard Light" which is, as one might assume, very bad for humans and other living things), i was able to verbally hit the gas and get the Happy Loving Couple 'trothed up in the time that the groom's uncle was able to buy us by flipping his sheriff's dept. badge at the steadily amassing horde of Robo-Dykes and "peace officers," and



we all lived happily ever after (except for our First Amendment rights of peaceable assembly, which, apparently, are null and void in the Land of Lincoln). After my closing argument ("*Rock over London, rock on Chicago! The mass is ended, let us go in peace to love and serve the lord!*") [hey, i always wanted to say that!], we abruptly dispersed, leaving the groom's mother—the only soul who was actually brave enough to light one of the sparklers i had the pyrotechnicians pass out to the crowd during the marriage vows—standing alone with the cops under the Huge Titanium Bean in a cloud of flaming green magnesium vapors. After that, we rode around on the el and played kazoos. It was great. *Where the fuck was i going with this?* Oh, yes, right, punk rock. Tricky subject to write about, that. I mean, i don't know if i'm just getting old and jaded (FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Two out of every three Asian strippers in North America are named "China," regardless of their actual ethnic origins. The remaining third are either named "Dragon Lady" or "Jade." Yes, i admit i just made that up, but it's pretty close to accurate), i now am no longer located anywhere near Where the Action™ Is, my current bandless spell has taken its toll on the Life of High Adventure i once led, or shit has just reached some entropic critical mass (wait... not really "critical mass"... i think i mean the OPPOSITE of "critical mass." What would that be? "Uncritical Anti-mass?" "Critical Mess?" "Instant Hole?" ["INSTANT HOLE, I HATE YOUUUUUUUUUUU!!"] {seriously, seriously, was there ever any better episode of *The Ant & The Aardvark*™ than the "Instant Hole" one? Where they had this Instant Hole that you could just fold up and put in your pocket, then take out and whip it on the ground, causing The Adversary to go plummeting into some newly created inky void? That episode *ruled!* Sure, people were always like "*no, dude, the best episode of The Ant & The Aardvark was the one where they had the green Aardvark and the blue Aardvark fighting over the Ant!*" but we only had a black & white TV when i was a kid so that one just seemed like two dark gray aardvarks to me, so fuck it, Instant Hole™ it is! {i am unsure as to what percentage of strippers in North America, Asian or otherwise, are named "Instant Hole," but i am virtually certain that it is not as many as the laws of harmony and proportion would dictate}) where punk rock, or at least writing about it, just doesn't matter any more), but i am finding it

REV. NØRB

harder and harder to find things of a punky nature to write about these days (as might well be evinced by the fact that i haven't written about anything other than the Ramones or my kitchen floor since June). I mean, i can't seem to find anything i love with such unbounded passion that i feel like coming to blows (or, better yet, blowing to come) over it; and, as a consequence, i also can't find anything i hate enough to really set me off (other than, of course, the things that we already hated in the '90s, and are therefore so obviously beneath our learned contempt that, like, who cares?). I really need to get, like, good and pissed off at some band like Social Distortion or the Dropkick Murphys or somebody, and get myself back on track, but, yet, i'd have to really go out of my way to do that, so, like, what's the point? (here's a little funny ha-ha for ya, since the Dropkick Murphys played before Game One of the World Series this year: My ex-girlfriend is from Boston. Ever since we, uh, "de-itemed," shall we say, i have been rooting super-ultra-mega-hyper-vociferously for all Boston sports teams to crash, burn, implode, choke, fart, self-immolate, and get sprinkled with table salt and die a hideous, festering death like the banana slugs they are. *Amount of Super Bowl and World Series victories obtained by the New England Patriots and Boston Red Sox in the 92 years prior to our breakup, when i was more or less neutral on the whole issue of Boston sports teams* [although i did hate the Red Sox for having the audacity to play my team, the Cincinnati Reds, in the World Series in 1975—however, the fact that i hated the Yankees equally as much for the same Crime Against the Big Red Machine in 1976 made them essentially neutral in many key regards]: 0. *Amount of Super Bowl and World Series victories obtained by the New England Patriots and Boston Red Sox in the four years following our breakup, when i wished all Boston sports teams boundless misery and infinite destruction with every fiber of my being*: 4 [assuming the Eagles don't pull a major rabbit out of their ass on Sunday {the Eagles, by the way, can fuck themselves—not for anything involving numbers like, say, "4th" and/or "26," but because that shade of ((alleged)) green they now use on their uniforms is



PERHAPS WE COULD ... MAKE A BUNCH OF EIGHT-FOOT-HIGH LAVA LAMPS, AND PUT THEM ON STAGE, AND PLUG THEM IN, AND TOSS A FEW WARPED TOUR™ TYPES IN THE LAVA LAMPS, AND AMUSE OURSELVES BY WATCHING THE BUBBLES COMING OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS AND BUTTS

GAY with a capital A. *Bring back an actual, recognizable shade of green immediately!* And go back to the old helmet design. And lose the serifs on the jersey lettering. And go re-install the air filter on my furnace, i think i put it in backwards and it's making a bunch of noise}. As Andrew Dice Clay once said re: A-bombing Japan, "what was IN them bombs? Fuckin' FOITILIZER?" Give me another five bucks and i'll hate your sports team to a world championship, too!) I try—Lord™ how i try!—to find punk stuff to write about, but it's all in vain. I go see bands, attempt to root up some strong feelings one way or another, try goading myself into extracting some succulent meat snack of controversy, disgust, or exhilaration from the proceedings—nada. It's like being one of those old guys who can't poop. I strain and grunt and bounce around, but nothing emerges. I went to see the Feelers/Catholic Boys/Hue Blanc's Joyless Ones/some high school Devo band the other night. The high school Devo band was on their last song, and i found them to be slightly less interesting to watch

than the lava lamps behind the bar (maybe, if this millennium is to actually go anywhere under our stewardship, we should start moving away from the idea of live bands, period, and maybe just invent huge, man-size lava lamps which we can set up on stage, plug in, and watch, while we play mix CDs thru the P.A. and sort of bop around a bit? Just a thought [if this isn't an acceptable plan, perhaps we could meet halfway, and make a bunch of eight-foot-high lava lamps, and put them on stage, and plug them in, and toss a few Warped Tour™ types in the lava lamps, and amuse ourselves by watching the bubbles coming out of their mouths and butts as they drown in festive, lively lava, or cranberry juice, or whatever exactly it is they put in those things. As long as i have some nice bubbles to look at, i'm usually pretty happy, so either works for me]). The Catholic Boys are, unfortunately, god awful, and seem to be generally held in fairly high

regard—which is usually a winning combination as far as me getting motivated to spew a few *bon mots* and such—but, double unfortunately, they are also my friends, therefore they would *really* have to suck and *really* have to get popular before i started bashing them (i will, however, allow myself the vicarious pleasure of quoting a Mr. Pat Smick of Spokane WA on their behalf: "Psychic Voodoo Mind Control? *That album is so bad I can't even explain how bad it is*"). Besides, what the fuck am i doing that's so great? I'm sitting around drinking beer and looking at the lava lamps because the bands are boring the shit out of me, that ain't exactly leading by example. I did take my earplugs out and face bandward for much of the Feelers' set, but i can't quite see that as qualifying as much of a Rock Event™ (certainly not quite up there with the massive Rock Events™ i've written about in the past, such as tiling my kitchen floor, et al). The highlight of the night was when Hue Blanc's Joyless Ones got into an onstage debate over whether or not the word "dalliance" had an implicit negative connotation. I think that was actually the most interesting thing that happened in my little world of punk rock in all of January, really, but there's not exactly a column in that, either (although anybody who can pony up a reasonable explanation as to why "dalliance" doesn't rhyme

with "alliance" is encouraged to do so), so i went to go see 88 MPH and the Blowtorches. I like both bands, but i would be lying if i said the highlight of the evening (apart from the Blowtorches' Leg Hounds cover—*Help! ASCAP! Police!*) was something other than the singers of both bands buying me a beer (each!) for coming out to their show. I then, in my mad quest to experience something worth writing about, saw the Mystery Girls, BBQ & King Khan, and some aptly named dude called "The Night Terrors"—trust me, go see The Night Terrors and you'll go running into the darkness screaming bloody murder—and, while the erstwhile Creepy and Blacksnake played some righteous stomp (*more doo-wop! Thy shaman commands thee!*), the real surprise of the evening was the Mystery Girls being really good. The Mystery Girls are kinda like the Michigan J. Frog™ of Rock—you know, that cute little be-top-hatted amphibian from the Warner Bros.™ "One Froggy Evening" cartoon, later made the *de facto* mascot of the WB™ Network? The frog **RAZORCAKE 27**

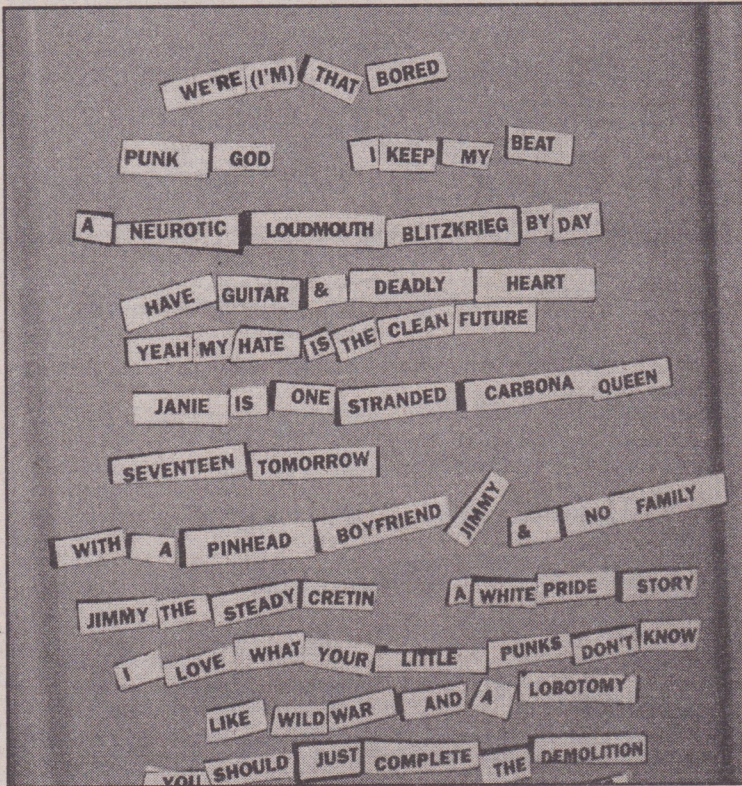
who dances and sings "Hello my honey, hello my sweetie, hello my ragtime GAAAAaaal!" and "ev-REE-bod-EE's doin' the Michigan RAAAAaaaaaGGG!" in front of his owner, but, when viewed by a crowd, does no such thing at all? Yeah, *that* frog. That's the Mystery Girls. Go see 'em one night, and everything's all "Hello my honey, hello my sweetie, hello my ragtime GAAAAaaal!" Bring somebody to see 'em the next night on your say-so, and they just sit under their top hat and ribbit. Oh well, Chuck Jones did great work. Who am i to be critical? Still left bereft of columnar fodder, with a deadline fast approaching, i began to pine for the '90s, when every Afro-North-American stripper in Afro-North-America was named after a precious mineral of some kind, and where we could actually get in knock-down drag-out slam-bang meet-'em-in-the-middle-figure-eight-races about who sucked, and what

BEFORE THE CEREMONY, EVERYBODY'S LIKE 'YEAH, NØRB! DO IT! IT'LL BE GREAT! DO YOUR THING, DUDE! WE LOVE YOU, MAN!', AND, AS SOON AS I START, EVERYBODY'S LIKE 'YOU'RE TALKING TOO MUCH! YOU'RE TAKING TOO LONG! YOU'RE RUINING AUNT HETTIE'S BIG DAY!'

sucked, and what colors of Chuck Taylors™ were cool to wear, and how many songs should be on each side of an album, and whether everyone from California was a douchebag or not because earthquake-proofing left them without any brick walls to take their band photo in front of, and other such weighty concerns/heady matters. Truly did our reasoned and impassioned discourses delineate the Stuff O' Legend! Nowadays, punk rock seems like it's about one rung above Fantasy Basketball on the Thrill-O-Meter, and, for those of us who've essentially permanently thrown our hats and/or Antler Helmets into the Burning Ring of Punk, this is not a good thing. But yet... i am a man! I have a brain! And even if i DON'T have a brain, i know where i can get one! And, heck, even if i don't have a MAN, i know where i can get one of those, too! THINK, YOU ADDLEPATED KNOCKWURST PLATTER! THINK! WAIT! I'VE GOT IT! Riddle me this, Caped Crusader: What is it that sets humans and robots apart from

animals, and animal robots? Is it brain or brawn or the month we were born? No! What sets human beings and robots apart from animals and animal robots is, of course, MAGNETIC POETRY! Magnetic Poetry! That's it! It is Magnetic Poetry that allows us to express the nooks and crannies of our mortal and robot souls with the splendid turns of phrase we all adorn the interior and exteriors of our metal homes with; gems like "sordid white girl looked like enormous black woman with huge chocolate butt" and "these small breasts do rock will you shower with me honey" or "worship the purple sausage for eternity" and even "I bomb has leave you here fluff" and "honey we go sleeping place mother" (all the above sonnets fully guaranteed to have been stuck to my house by the front door by real humans or real robots at one point in time in the last few months). And, if it is Magnetic Poetry that sets mankind and robot-kind apart from animalkind and robot-animalkind, what exactly might it be that sets punkkind and punk-robotkind apart from mankind and regular robotkind? That's Right! PUNK ROCK MAGNETIC POETRY!!! And, amazingly enough, while The Man™ might put the Ergs! on Cartoon Network™—and The Man™ might play the Dickies' version of "Silent Night" during the Packer-Viking game—as of yet, The Man™ cannot seem to pull the trigger on Punk Rock Magnetic Poetry—which, as far as i can tell, makes it THE LAST GREAT FRONTIER OF UNSULLIED PUNKDOM AS WE KNOW IT! Needless to say, i wasted no time in setting about to save the Universe: Acquiring a ten-foot roll of inch-wide magnetic tape from the local Megalo-Mart™ (\$3.64 + tax), i took ten

classic punk rock albums—the first three Ramones LPs, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Singles Going Steady* by the Buzzcocks, and the first albums by the Clash, Saints, Generation X, the Vibrators, and the Undertones (said albums entitled "nothing," *(I'm) Stranded*, "nothing," *Pure Mania*, and "nothing," in that order)—and typed up all the song titles, then i did the same with ten records from 2004 (roughly, but not exactly, corresponding to my still-as-yet-quite-fluid-and-unemphatic top ten list for last fiscal period)—Reigning Sound's *Too Much Guitar!*, The Paybacks' *Harder and Harder*, M.O.T.O.'s *Single File* (which is, like it or not, the *Singles Going Steady* of your generation ["Your Generation" being, also like it or not, the "My Generation" of my generation]), *The Parallel Universe of Henry Fiat's Open Sore*, the Operation S album, the Marked Men's *On the Outside* LP, the Briefs' *Sex Objects* CD, the Knockout Pills' *1+1 =*



ATE, Morticia's Lovers' *Smash the Radio* and that Hatepinks album i made fun of last year for sounding like the song titles were randomly assembled by choosing "punk" words from a hat (i thought it only fair for me to put the words back in the hat, as it were). Making D.I.Y. Magnetic Poetry turns out to be neither harder nor easier than one would suspect it would be: It is exactly as hard and exactly as easy as one would assume it to be. You cut out about a five inch strip of words, peel the adhesive back about five inches on the magno-roll, then start pressing the words down onto the adhesive. If things start going kattywampus, cut the words off at your earliest convenience, realign the remainder, and continue on. When you're done with that, start cutting the fuckers apart. Cutting 874 tiny little words apart is tedious, but not particularly aggravating in any unforeseen manner. After that, ya find the nearest wall, ceiling, rooftop or door (assuming, of course, you too are living the Lusttron™ Life in your dazzlingly

gray all-metal house), and unleash the Inner Magnetic Leapin' Lanny Poffo™ in you. In jig time, i had created two sprawling, magno-poetic epics; one from the classic punk words, one from the modern punk words—figuring that, even in the OH SO FUCKING HIGHLY UNLIKELY event that this is just, like, total bullshit, my exacting dissection of punk rock song titles of two different eras at literally (i think?) the molecular level (the "molecular level" here meaning "word by word," in case you think i'm bullshitting; the "atomic level" would be taking the song titles and rearranging them *letter by letter*, and, presumably, the "subatomic level" would be me chopping the letters into little pieces and reassembling the parts. I can assure you that i will be marketing single occupancy lava lamps in northern Estonia before i get to the point where i'm analyzing punk rock at the subatomic level) might prove fleetingly interesting in a compare/contrast sort of way, regardless if the poems themselves suck or not. WHICH, OF COURSE, THEY DON'T!!! THEY ARE HOWL-LIKE IN THE SCOPE OF THEIR MAGNO-MAJESTY!!! The one rule was that i had to use every single word in each poem; the one caveat is that, not thinking things out particularly far in advance, i typed up all the song titles in all cpps—therefore, with no effective indicator of top from bottom, there was no discernible way to differentiate the word "NO" from the word "ON" (or, for that matter, "IN" from "NI," although we are no longer the Knights Who Say "Ni," so that particular linguistic cocklebur did not come into play), so the two are used interchangeably. *Razorcake* regrets the error. Actually, tough shit.

PUNK ROCK MAGNO-POEM #1 (Classic):

WE'RE (I'M) THAT BORED

PUNK GOD I KEEP MY BEAT
A NEUROTIC LOUDMOUTH BLITZKRIEG BY DAY
HAVE GUITAR & DEADLY HEART
YEAH MY HATE IS THE CLEAN FUTURE
JANIE IS ONE STRANDED CARBONA QUEEN
SEVENTEEN TOMORROW
WITH A PINHEAD BOYFRIEND JIMMY & NO FAMILY
JIMMY THE STEADY CRETIN A WHITE PRIDE STORY
I LOVE WHAT YOUR LITTLE PUNKS DON'T KNOW
LIKE WILD WAR AND A LOBOTOMY
YOU SHOULD JUST COMPLETE THE DEMOLITION
WHAT'S WRONG WITH REMOTE LUST
IS IT ABOUT KICKS YOU DON'T GET?
I GO KILL THAT BABY*
WANNA MAN I'M HERE
YOU GOTTA LOVE BODIES NOWADAYS
I WANNA BE THE NEED
WELL I FOUGHT BAD FEELINGS GIMME ANYTHING
I ALWAYS GET PROBLEMS FROM SHEENA
EMI LIAR DON'T GLUE BILLY'S HEART
YEAH SO NOT LOVE GIMME PETROL
SEE NO CONTROL OVER YOU
DANCE TO 3RD FURS IN BASEMENT**
GARAGELAND ANNOYS THE BOY THIEVES
LONDON'S DANCE IS YOUR WAY?
DON'T WANNA MALE. I HEART GIRLS
YOU WANNA NAME ME
THE OPPORTUNITIES OPENED
EVERYBODY'S GONE GIMME SOME HEAD
TEENAGE ORGASM OH YEAH
(SHE'S KISSIN' IT
LIPSTICK DOWN ON MY CHAINSAW***
SWEET SWALLOW EROTIC GLUE****
SOMETHING'S MESSIN' KLEENEX TODAY
WHAT A TREATMENT I ROCK
READY SWEET HEADBANGER
PRETTY TEENAGE ROCKER
COMMANDO CONFESSIONS IN YOU
STIFF PROMISES CAN'T WRONG YOU
GIVE YOUTH HERE
IT BE TIME TO?
DAY TIME ENTERTAINMENT NIGHTS
HARMONY WITH ROCKAWAY RAMONA
GOOD GIRLS CAN'T CLASH
A HUNDRED WHIPS BRINGING SUB-MISSION
DOOR WAY HOLIDAYS
WHY YOU HAPPENED GIRL
SAVE WHAT'S VACANT IN YOU
I WALK INTO THIRD I SNIFF MY BIRD
LET'S RUNAROUND THIS AFFAIR
HAPPY FINGERS TODAY NEW ANARCHY TOMORROW
LOVE HER TOUCH
SHE'S YOUTH
YOUTH EVER PROMISES TRUTH
SURFIN' BOYS LISTENIN' IN CALIFORNIA
COUSINS NOW HOP IN HAVANA
PUNK ROCKERS WANNA WAY AROUND GAME
I JUMP YOU
EVER GETTA HEART LOCKET
OH BROKE BABY DO MODEL IT
FALLEN SUZY CASBAH JUDY CARE TO BE ONE
53RD HAMMERSMITH GENERATION
BOP IN SOME CITY DUB PALAIS
VENICE LONDON YORK U.K.
LOVE?
I LOVE YOUR MIND I DO
I WANNA GO DOWN ON YOU AGAIN
I KISS THE BRAT
MORE WRECKED BURNING GIRL
A HEART OF NOISE
I SO GLAD YOU MY GIRL

SUMMER SUN CAREER NOW
YOUTH AUTONOMY FAMILY RIOT
WANNA BEACH THE SUN AND I NO LISTEN TO THE DOORS
A) WHITE WORLD NEVER TRUE
OH YOU'RE GONE*****
DON'T KID THE ADDICT
GONNA JONES
POLICE IN THE STREET
SHOCK CONTROL U.S.A.
WHY COMES LAW
THE JAIL PROMISES WILD HAPPY SHIT
REMEMBER YOUR WILD SLAVE

* by this, i believe i meant Jimmy the White Pride pinhead

** as the Rhythm Chicken will attest, the third Psychedelic Furs album was a big homo youth album back in The Day. I seem to remember there being about four good songs out of ten on that record, but that was obviously the beginning of the end for them, which is a shame, because *Talk Talk* is one of my favorite albums of all time.

*** "*Lipstick on your chainsaw / told a tale on you-hoo / lipstick on your chainsaw / said you were untrue-hoo / bet your bottom dollar / you and I are thru / oh lipstick on your chainsaw / told a tale on you*"

**** Okay, even i admit that this is getting a bit much, but the whole appeal of Magnetic Poetry in the first place (apart from the fact that it's compellingly satisfying to create semi-coherent solution sets from a strictly limited pool of potential components) is that you get to think you're really getting away with something by making smutty innuendo. I mean, when the "real" Magnetic Poetry™ people include words like "sausage" in their kits, i highly doubt it's in there to facilitate the magno-poet's recreation of the simple joys of the Old Country.

***** Damn, that was abrupt! I didn't see it coming this time either.

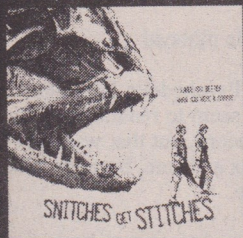
PUNK ROCK MAGNO-POEM #2 (Modern):

APEX #265 PT. 2

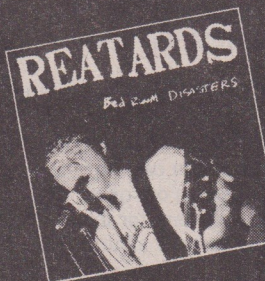
BLACK SHEEP BORN IN THE USA
I CRYSTALLIZE THE COME OF WICKED PRESIDENTS
WE GOT FLUORESCENT KIDS INFECTED WITH PARANOIA*
WAITING FOR CHICKEN WOMEN A DEAD GENERATION
I RIOT AND I'M MR. PILL
YOU CAN'T STAB GHOSTS SO I'LL COLLECT MEDICATION
THIS LIVING IS AN ETERNELLE BRAINLESS EXISTENCE
ALERT THIS ROTTEN BEACH I'M BROKEN NOT BRIGHT
CELEBRATE A HEADACHE
JUMPY HUMMIN' POLAROID BABY CAN I PORK YOU
I'M THE SUPERIDER BABY CRAWL FOR MY LOVE
IT'S NOT SKINNY
DON'T CRY ABOUT THE DOG
SLEEP INSIDE THE FUNNY FISTED THUNDER OF MAGIC ASS-
HOLES**
EVERYDAY WE SANG THE WORDS TO THE SUBURBS RECORD
RIGHT***
PLASTIC GERM THINGS AND STRAP ON DICK TONIGHT
TRY TO STOP THE SATURDAY SPECIAL
LAZY SUMMER McIDIOT LOVE 4,000 TEENAGE INCHES
WHAT A PENIS UNE LOVE VITAMIN
HEIL THE GOOD GEEK LIFE
I WANNA TARGET THE MYSTERY HATEPINK OF A GIRL
SMASH THE HIPPY'S HEAD**** I'M EVIL TODAY
DO HER ALL DAY STRAIGHTEN THAT LOST UPTIGHT LOVER
OUT
WHEN YOU ARE READY DANCE ON EPHEDRINE AND
EXCEDRIN*****
PRETTY THING YOU ART THE ONE
LET A SELFISH CLOWN IN SIDE CHILD LET'S HATE YA
FRIENDS
I'M RUNDOWN BABY BLUE*****
MIDNIGHT DRUGS ROT MY CHEMICAL ALCOHOLIDAY
STILL I DO ME BEST
GET YOURSELF COMING SALLY DO YOUR THING KID

REATARDS

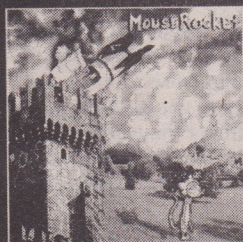
Bed Room DISASTERS



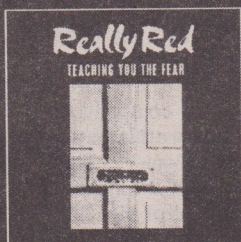
Snitches get Stitches



St Bushmills Choir



MouseRocket



Really Red

And Much Much More



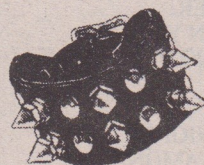
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LOVE DEVICES ARE USED
 WAIT I TOUCHED YOUR NAKED SKIN
 GO TO THE SCOTCH NOT LE DOCTOR
 JUST GIVE ME SKULL
 SHE'S THE MASTER IT BE EASY NO PROBLEM
 30 MORE TIMES ON TOP I CAN'T LOSE
 BOY IT'S WRONG HIT ME
 DÉLINQUANTE LOVE AT MACY'S AND SKELETONS WALK AT
 NIGHT
 ROLL YOUR CHOPS ON SUNDAYS
 ANTS IN THE WOUND ME SO PROUD
 BOMB 159 COOL BOY PLACES SANS JEUNESSE
 I HEART IT! MOVE HERE
 YOU RENT OTHER NOUVELLE OBJECTS WE DOWN MON
 GO TO THEIR TERRORIST-ORGANIZATION RADIO PHONING
 STUPID VINCE
 PROGRAMMATION J. AM AT DE SENS VEUX*****
 YOUNG ORANGE NIGHT AT HOME TO DÉGÉNÉRÉ FRIENDS
 MIDLIFE ROT KILLED THE BADGER
 GO CALL APHONE OUTSIDE SCENE RECOGNITION
 DUNNO ANTISOCIAL SPEAKER JIMMY*****
 HATESWING MAFIA KNOWS EACH LIFE
 GO BY SHOPLIFTING CLASS
 PROTO STREET STYLES
 TELLER SET BACK
 ALWAYS BIG OPERATION AND YOU CAN'T REPEL IT
 USA NEVER CITIZEN'S DIRECTION
 DO DRIVE OUT LAZY DAN GO WHERE I'M RIGHT

WHEN ME SEE GUANTANAMO SUMMERTIME SCREEN ROOM
 UND BE IT NOT GRANDIR IF ASTRONUTS SAY SO
 YES JE NE SUIS PAS
 JE SO NE RIEN PAS
 YOU WAS GONE HOW IMPOSÉE
 GONE WEEK HOME ARREST
 MONTH TRY DROWNING
 ROT YOU
 ON CAME SATAN TRULY ONE HALFSIZE DICK
 GO AWAY HIPPIE TURD
 NO PRÉVISIBLE GIMMICK ILLUSION OF CHEESE CAN ROCK
 THE BASTARD CALLS TIME
 (KILLED BY) THE NO SEX PILLS
 I BORED TRY AMOUR
 EVERYBODY NEED THE LOVE THING
 DON'T TOUCH ME NOTHING LIVES
 DESTROY EVERYTHING
 SUICIDE IS FINE
 SEHR GUT SIR
 ~ TOUCHE

* Observation #1: Punk Rockers use bigger words these days.

** Observation #2: They also use longer sentences.

*** Actually, the only Suburbs song i've ever sang to in my life was "Chemistry Set" (complete lyrics: "I'm into chemistry and that's about it")

**** Observation #3: Punk Rockers sing about hippies a lot more in 2004 than they did in 1977. Why is that?

***** (sic)

***** Note clever Dylan reference, unless it was a clever Gene Vincent reference

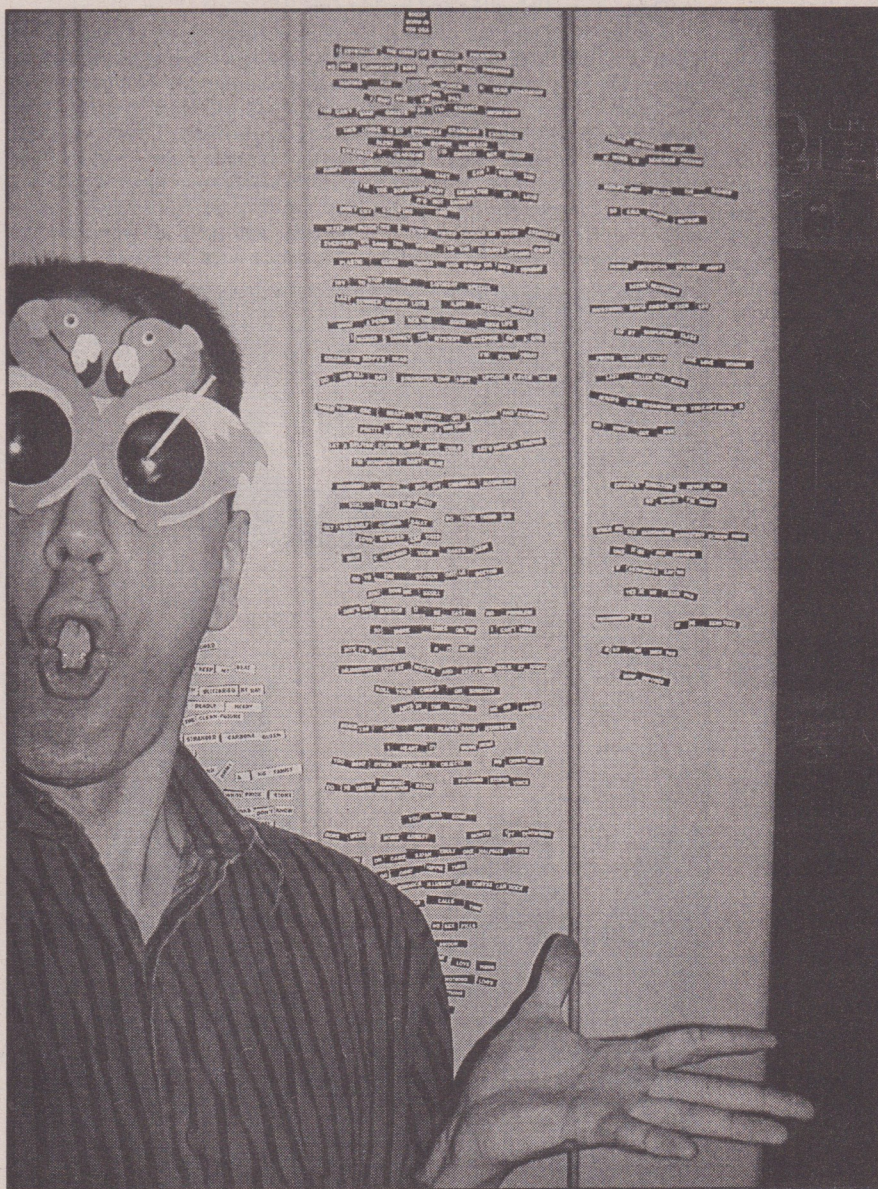
***** Okay, i freely admit it: It was a stupid idea to use the Operation S album as part of the source material, given as how the brunt of the song titles were *en Français*. However, as a douchebag who crowed loudly and often in 2004 about how European bands should flatly give up on singing in English and just belt out their tunes in their goofy native tongues, i thought i might come off as wankeresque if i left the Frenchies out of the equation simply because they weren't properly Anglophonic. In hindsight, i probably shoulda used the songs from The Girls' album instead. *Quel the fuck damage.*

***** Jimmy??? Didn't i whack that fuck in 1977???

GRAND SWEEPING CONCLUSION:

Well, taken at the molecular level, classic punk seems to be about being a degenerate, fucking young girls who later spurn you, and going to prison. Modern punk seems to be about being a degenerate, fucking degenerate girls who later spurn you, and killing yourself. If anyone in our studio audience feels that they want to take a whack at assembling a Punk Rock Magno-Poem™ with a happy ending out of these or any other sufficiently punk rock word-molecules, i would welcome any and all sub-missions. However, do not, FOR ONE SECOND, think that just cutting a bunch of words up and reassembling them without first duly affixing them to a properly magnetic backing will be allowed nor tolerated. I may not believe in much these days, but there is one vital code i adhere to with stone cold certainty: **DEATH TO FALSE MAGNETIC POETRY!!!** Also, please send me really big lava lamps in the mail.

Løve,
 -Norb



REV. NORB





SEAN CARSWELL

A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

THE PURPLE MORMON BIKE

We were all pretty surprised when Oscar decided to leave us and go off on a Mormon mission. Most of us didn't even know he was Mormon. Eddie knew. He knew that Oscar was a Mormon. Eddie didn't know about the mission, though. And, in fact, the mission kinda fucked Eddie.

See, Oscar and Eddie were roommates. Oscar didn't tell Eddie about the mission until about two days before rent was due when Oscar said, "Uh, I'm not gonna pay rent next month. And by the way, I won't pay rent anymore or have any more money for bills because next week I'm going to Costa Rica to convert Ticos to the Church of the Latter Day Saints and if this leaves you broke, well, fuck you. It's the Christian way." Or something like that. I'm sure Oscar phrased it better than that. I wasn't there. I just know the story by how Eddie told it. Anyway, the actions were the same, even if the words were different.

It was Oscar's mission, though, that led us to be here six months later, seven of us lying in the grass by the community dock, writhing in pain like some kind of bombed out beach bum triage. Eddie, who'd already taken his lumps, limped up the dock with the purple Mormon bike between his legs. Ready to deal it its final death blow.

But I should back up a little and let you know who Oscar was.

Oscar and I weren't really friends. I just hung out with him because he was part of our group and I was part of our group. But there would be no love lost between the two of us. I didn't like him because he would always fuck with me whenever I tried to talk to girls. I'd be at a party chatting someone up and Oscar would come along and say shit like, "Dude, you left your crab shampoo in my car," and he'd say to the girl, "It's true, he has crabs." Shit like that. Drove me nuts. And it went both ways. Oscar loathed me. And to be honest, he had every right to loathe me.

For one thing, I started it by giving him the nickname Oscar, back in the sixth grade. His last name was Meyer, and he was a bit of a weenie. It seemed like a no-brainer to me. I didn't expect it to catch on as well as it did. But it caught on. It got to the point where, in high school, no one remembered his real first name. He dated this one girl for six months during his sophomore year before she finally got a peep at his driver's license and found out his real first name: Brian. She broke up with him. Said that he'd been lying to her all this time about his name. How could she ever trust him now? Oscar blamed me. Probably still blames me.

I made matters worse for Oscar during our senior year. He and I and this kid named Neil were hanging out at Oscar's place, listening to music and Oscar decided he was gonna fart on Neil's head. It was all innocent enough, I guess, but I didn't like it because he was always picking on Neil. And so Oscar went up to Neil and tried to fart on his head, only a little squirt came out with the gas. Neil heard it and jumped out of the way before any poop hit him, but pretty soon, Oscar was running to the bathroom with a brown snail sliming down his leg. The next day, there were flyers all over school that had a bad comic rendition of a mid-shit Oscar on it and it said, "Oscar Meyer now has an easy squirt bottle!" Everyone knew what it meant. And everyone knew I made the flyer. So, yeah, I wasn't Oscar's favorite guy.

Eddie and Oscar were tight, though. They were possum brothers.

The summer after high school, Oscar's dad had given him a video camera. One day, he and Eddie were rolling around town in Oscar's Torino station wagon. It was one of the coolest cars I'd ever seen, even if I did call it the weenie mobile to Oscar's face. It was gunmetal gray, sleek, perfectly restored. Seventies and shiny rims. Bad fucking ass. And they were cruising down Tropical Trail when Eddie saw a dead possum in the road. He nearly jumped out of his seat. "Pull over!" he screamed.

"What?" Oscar said, panicked. "What is it?"

"Pull over!" Eddie kept screaming. "Pull the fuck over!"

So Oscar jammed on the brakes and whipped the Torino station wagon into the edge of an orange grove. Eddie grabbed the video camera with one hand and a boom box with the other. He jumped out the door of the car and ran back to the possum.

When he got there, he set the camera and box down and knelt by the possum. He poked it with a stick. Its head rolled on its shoulders. Blood was caked underneath it. This poor guy wasn't playing dead. He was dead.

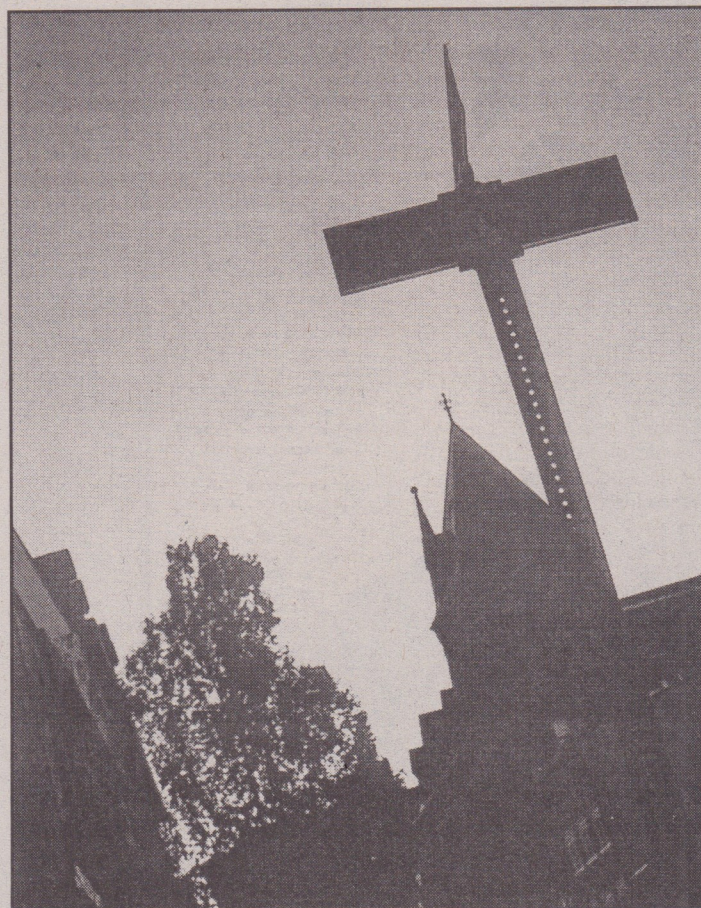
Eddie took the stick and pushed the possum forward, out of the pool of blood. Then he walked across the road and set up the camera and the boom box.

By now, Oscar had turned the Torino station wagon around and pulled up next to Eddie. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Back up," Eddie said. "And when I give you the signal, come hauling ass down the road, swerve off it, and hit the possum with your driver side tires. Okay?"

Oscar started giggling and backing up.

Eddie got behind the camera. He double checked the cassette in the boom box, but there was no doubt what tape it was. *Margin Walker* by Fugazi. The only cassette we listened to that summer. My best memory of Oscar, the closest I ever came to being friends with him, was when he called me up and said, "Ian Mackaye has a new band. I have the tape. Come over." We didn't know about the other cassette Fugazi had released six months earlier. Merritt Island was still a small town then. Word traveled slow. *Margin Walker* was the first we'd heard from Ian Mackaye since Minor Threat's *Complete Discography*, and we'd all worn out two or three cassette copies of that album. Anyway, I went over to Oscar's that



night. It was about a week after high school graduation, and I was feeling like shit was finally gonna happen in my life and here we had Fugazi, Ian Mackaye not screaming but singing. And that fucking bass. It sounded perfect. We just kept flipping that tape over and over and over. Perfect.

So back to the side of the road: Eddie started his little film. He pushed play without cueing anything up on the boom box. I guess he figured any song was as good as the next. The cassette was on "Promises." Eddie turned on the video camera and talked over the song. He said, "Possum, you're nothing to me now. You're not a brother; you're not a friend. I don't want to know you, or what you do. I don't want to see you at the hotels. I don't want you near my house. When you come to visit our mother, I want to know a day in advance, so I won't be there." Straight out of *The Godfather, Part II*. I guess Eddie had it memorized. But then he start-

I'D BE AT A PARTY CHATTING SOMEONE UP AND OSCAR WOULD COME ALONG AND SAY SHIT LIKE, "DUDE, YOU LEFT YOUR CRAB SHAMPOO IN MY CAR."

ed ad libbing. "In fact, Possum, it's time for you to meet my friend Oscar." Then he yelled, "Oscar!"

The camera stayed focused on the possum. Eddie turned up the stereo. Fugazi screamed, "Promises, promises, promises, words," again and again. The Torino station wagon came into the frame of the camera, swerving off the road, kicking up mud and grass. The driver's side wheels stayed on the pavement. You could hear Eddie laughing and see Oscar grinning as the Torino barreled over the dead possum. Eddie pulled it together long enough to finish it off. "You were my brother, Possum," he said. "I loved you." The shot ended with the possum lying squashed on the road and the Fugazi song cutting out.

After that, it seemed like Eddie and Oscar were at every party I went to that summer, showing that same old video. I probably would've gotten sick of it, but that background song. What a song.

And so that was Eddie and Oscar, their whole lives wrapped up in a minute-long short: Eddie trying to make something out of nothing, seeing possibilities in roadkill, always thinking. And Oscar, just along to fuck shit up and kick down a dead possum.

Fast forward a few years. That summer ended and we all left for college and kept in touch and hung out together during summers and eventually Eddie and Oscar and I all graduated college and ended up back in Merritt Island. Sure, there'd been a lot of talk about leaving that town and never coming back. There's always that kind of talk. But when you graduate college and you have no money and no one's hiring, you do what you can. What we all could do was go back to the hometown and get the crappy jobs like we worked every summer and try to make shit happen. It was slow going.

Around this time, I started noticing little changes in Oscar. Like, one afternoon, Eddie, Oscar, and I were all heading to the beach in that Torino station wagon. Eddie and Oscar sat up front. I sat in the back seat. Eddie rooted around the pile on the passenger side floor, looking for some music to play. He kept picking stuff up and holding it out for my inspection. He found some nasty old socks, a crusty pair of baggies, an old guitar string, random shit like that. This went on for about five minutes before Eddie held up a cassette tape and said, "Hey, Oscar, what's this bullshit?"

I looked at the tape. It was strange. Strange in the sense that it looked like some kind of adult contemporary shit. The cover had a photo of a guy with that stylized eighth-inch stubble on his face, looking like it would take longer to get your stubble that perfect than it would to just fucking shave. And his hair looked like he may have tried out for Wham! but George Michael said, "No, dude, you look so gay you'd yank me right out of the closet." I had no idea who this guy was, but I could tell I didn't like him. And I couldn't figure out what this tape was doing in this car. I mean, shit, Oscar's the guy who introduced me to the Dead Kennedys. So I said, "Tell me that's a lost, great New Wave album that no one heard of because the cover's so lame."

"It's not, dude," Eddie said. "It's fucking Christian rock."

I snatched the cassette out of Eddie's hand, partly to have a closer look, partly to make sure the cassette was as far as possible from the stereo. I looked through the titles. One of them said something about a cross, but otherwise there was nothing overtly Christian about it. I almost asked Eddie how he knew what it was at all, but then I remembered that he'd spent about half of the previous summer trying to make it with one of those God Squad broads. "Did your mom leave this in here, Oscar?" I asked. I was trying to give him an out.

But, no, Oscar said, "It's my tape. It's pretty good. Here, let's listen." He reached back to take the cassette from me. I held it farther away.

Eddie said, "Oscar, if you play this tape, I'm gonna beat your ass."

"After he does, I'm gonna kick you when you're down," I added. I thought about tossing the cassette out the window, but instead we all just let the subject drop.

More things kept creeping up that fall. For one thing, Oscar started dating one of those God Squad broads. One of the Mormon God Squadders, not one of the Baptist ones. I'd go over to their place to hang out with Eddie, and Oscar and his girl would be lying on the couch together. Not making out or anything. Not even watching TV or talking. Just spooning. It would've been sweet if it wasn't so fucking pitiful. Shortly after he started seeing her, he quit drinking, too. He'd still hang out with us in bars when he wasn't home spooning his little God Squad broad. He just wouldn't drink. He'd drive, though, which was cool. I liked having

the designated driver. I liked it so much that I never threw any of his Christian rock cassettes out the window. I didn't let Oscar play them when I was in the car, but I didn't throw them out, either.

The last little change in Oscar came when he quit cussing. Suddenly, all his "fucks" were turned into "lumps." As in:

"Hey Oscar, did you fuck that Mormon chick, yet?"

"Man, lump you."

I swear to God or whoever that I wanted to beat his ass every time he did that. It made me so fucking mad. I guess I brought the anger on myself, though, by asking him that question every time I saw him.

Finally, December rolled around. Oscar was driving Eddie and Neil and Neil's sometime-girlfriend Tina home from the bar when Neil asked Oscar, "When are you taking off on that mission?"

"What's the mission?" Tina asked. Tina was the kind of broad who was always looking to get into some kind of mischief. She probably thought that when Neil said "mission," he meant it like, "Your mission tonight is to steal your dad's boat and take us all skinny-skiing." At least that's what I would've thought, had I been there.

Instead, Neil answered the question, "Oscar's going to Costa Rica."

"What? To go surfing?" Tina asked.

"Nope. To spread the word of the Latter Day fucking Saints," Neil said.

"Latter Day Lumping Saints," Tina corrected.

Eddie snapped into the conversation at this point. "You're going on a mission, Oscar? For real?"

Oscar nodded.

"When?" Eddie asked.

"Day after tomorrow," Oscar said.

Sure enough, the next day, Oscar moved his shit out of the apartment and back into his parents' house. He did it while Eddie was gone and made off with most of the pots and pans and food in the fridge and pretty much everything else that he could get into the back of that Torino station wagon. Eddie came from work when Oscar was on the last load. That's when Oscar promised to pay the bills and rent and shit until Eddie found another roommate. And, of course, Oscar never did. He just took off.

The only thing left was the purple Mormon bike. It was actually a pretty cool beach cruiser, the purple notwithstanding. Eddie probably could've sold it for about a hundred bucks and made back some of what he lost on the lack of roommate situation. But Eddie didn't sell it. He just rode it around town for a few months.

In April, Eddie got a letter from Oscar. He brought the letter to the bar with him and read it to me and Tina and a few more of us. The letter was all about how the Mormons down there called the local women "snakes" because they'd hiss whenever the Mormons rode by in their stupid white short sleeve shirts with ties attached. Well, Oscar didn't add the part about the shirts. I added that. But, anyway, that was the whole letter. And Eddie was pissed off. Unreasonably so.

Tina was pissed off, too. She said, "Man, that's bullshit. They're women, not snakes. It's not like they asked his Mormon ass to come down there and knock on their door with his stupid ass religion."

"You get mad at Oscar for calling women 'snakes' but you never get mad at me for calling women 'broad's'?" I asked. Tina shrugged. I turned to Eddie, "And you get mad at Oscar for this letter but you didn't get mad at him for leaving you without a roommate and with all those bills?"

"You just don't understand," Eddie said. "It's just like him and that girl spooning on the couch for hours. You know, like, why

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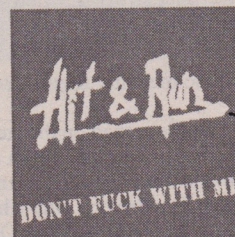
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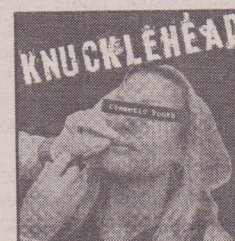
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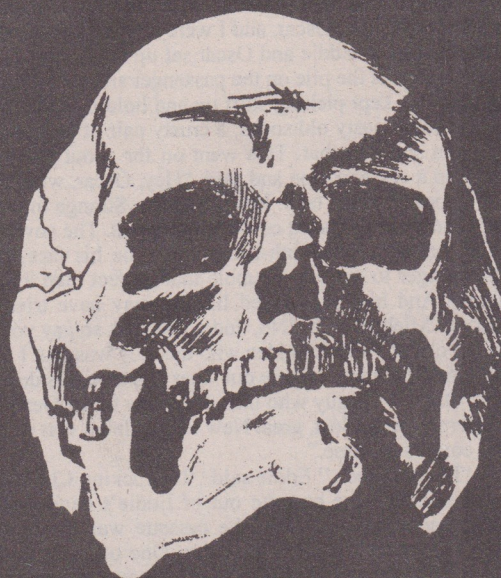
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don't they just fuck already? They're all grown up. They can fuck if they want to."

Eddie was right. I didn't understand. But that night, we all went back to Eddie's for an after hours party. At around three A.M., Eddie said, "I have a mission for us."

He grabbed the purple Mormon bike and went out the front door. A few of us followed, curious. Eddie rolled the bike down to the community dock, three blocks from his house. The dock was about two hundred feet long and four feet wide and it stretched out into the Indian River. Two hundred feet from shore, the Indian River is usually about three feet deep. The dock was six feet high.

Eddie rode the bike onto the dock. He licked his finger and held it up

remember Oscar owning. All of them gone. Warped in the Florida heat. Melted. Ground under the wheels of a frontloader at the county dump. Gone.

We got maudlin. We ordered shots and drank to our fallen heroes. We cursed our high school poverty because, the truth was, we didn't own our own copies of a lot of those albums. We'd talked Oscar into buying them because Oscar's parents had a lot of money and would let him buy whatever he wanted. And, in the day and age of cassettes, all of the music of our youth was about three years from warping, getting eaten in the roller of a tape deck, fading away.

We stayed at Shuttles until the whole crew showed up and drank with us and helped us mourn. We drank and mourned everything from the

AND HIS HAIR LOOKED LIKE HE MAY HAVE TRIED OUT FOR WHAM! BUT GEORGE MICHAEL SAID, "NO, DUDE, YOU LOOK SO GAY YOU'D YANK ME RIGHT OUT OF THE CLOSET."

in the air, like he was checking the wind. He turned to those of us who were on shore in front of the dock, and he smiled. Without another word, he started pedaling as fast as he could, down the whole two hundred feet of the dock, tires clunking over the spaces between planks, Eddie's figure silhouetted in the moonlight, and finally, the bike flying off the end of the dock, followed by a splash.

I ran down the dock as soon as Eddie landed in the water. Not because I was worried he was hurt. Because it looked like fun and I wanted the next turn.

Eddie stood in the three feet of water and handed the bike to me. I pedaled it back to shore, turned

around, and took my turn, flying down the dock, launching the purple Mormon bike into the river, catching the front tire in the river and flying over the handlebars into the cushion of warm water.

Tina went next. We all took a few turns that night. After that, it became a thing to do once the bars closed. We kept at it for three or four weeks before we got bored and went back to just drinking.

In June, Eddie got the mother of all letters from Oscar. He called me up and said, "Dude, you gotta meet me at Shuttles right now." Shuttles was our hangout. Just a dive bar in north Merritt Island, nestled between an orange grove and a junkyard with old rocket parts from Kennedy Space Center. I didn't ask Eddie what it was all about. I just drove up there.

When I got to Shuttles, Eddie was waiting for me, with a pitcher of beer and two shots. I sat at the stool next to him. Eddie didn't say a word. He poured me a beer from the pitcher and slid it over. I said, "Thanks." Eddie didn't answer. He pushed the shot of whiskey in front of me.

"You better drink this," he said.

I didn't need my arm twisted. I raised the shot, said, "Cheers," and downed it. When the whiskey shivers were over, I said, "Why all the drama, Eddie?"

Eddie pulled out an international mail envelope. He fingered the red and blue diagonals at the edges, before pulling out the letter. "You're not gonna believe this," he said.

I picked up the letter and read it. Eddie was right. I couldn't believe it. I ordered two more shots. Eddie and I both drank before we said anything.

"He got rid of them all. Just fucking threw them away," Eddie said.

I nodded. I hated to hear the words. Because what the letter said was that Oscar had written his mom from Costa Rica and asked her to throw away all his old punk rock records, tapes, CDs. Everything. If it wasn't Christian, she tossed it. To make matters worse, she'd tossed them all in April and Oscar didn't tell us until June just to make sure we didn't try to pick his trash. It was for our own good, the letter said. That's why he said he didn't just donate all the music to Goodwill: because evil needs to be stamped out, not passed on.

"It breaks my heart to think of it," Eddie said. "That *Frankenchrist* album in a landfill somewhere, warping in the heat."

"Those early Minor Threat seven inches," I said.

"That fucking Bad Brains vinyl," Eddie said.

"And the Big Boys. The fucking Big Boys," I said.

And so on. We spent about an hour just listing every album we could



Misfits songs that we used to scream out in the mall to the first four Dead Milkmen albums to *Milo Goes to College* to *Post-Mersh, Vol. 1* to *Margin Walker*. Fucking *Margin Walker*.

After the bars closed, we all ended up back at the community dock. The purple Mormon bike was going down. There was no other recourse. Eddie went first. He pedaled as fast as he could down the two hundred feet of dock, hit the air, then hit the river-bottom hard. He stood up dazed. It hadn't rained in over a month, so the water level was way down. The river was only about two feet deep at the end of the dock. Eddie

wasn't expecting this. The fall had fucked up his knee, though Eddie wasn't sure how bad it was. Still, he said nothing. He handed the bike up onto the dock and waded back to shore, doing his best to hide his new limp.

I went next. The fall was farther than I'd expected, too. The water shallower. My knee made out okay, but I wracked my balls when I went over the handlebars. I didn't say anything either. In fact, no one said anything. We all just went. One by one. Everyone crashing hard. Everyone keeping it to themselves until the whole group had gone over the edge of the dock.

The bike was in pretty bad shape. The front rims had gotten warped. The chain was rusted out from all the other times we'd ridden the bike into the river. The gooseneck was stripped and you could hardly steer the bike at all. The back tire was flat. We sat around the grass in front of the community dock, nursing our wounds, looking at the bike. Tina said, "We're not gonna be doing this anymore."

Neil said, "Nah, you can fix that bike. A little oil. Tighten the spokes. Fix the back tube. It'll be good as new."

I looked at Eddie. Eddie stared at the bike. Neil was right. It was beaten, but not broken. Eddie stood up and rolled the bike back onto the dock. He stood on the pedals and rode that thing down the dock one last time. The back rim thumping on the boards, chain squeaking, everything wobbling, Eddie drunk and doing all he could to keep from going off the side. When he hit the air at the end, instead of popping the front wheel up, he jammed it down, crashing it hard into the riverbottom and rolling head first over the handlebars and into the water. Amazingly, he wasn't injured. The bike, though, was done. The front forks had bent into the frame. One of the pedals fell off into the river. Eddie decided to leave the rest of the bike in the river with it. Let the barnacles grow on the decomposing steel. Let the fish come feed off it.

He waded back up to shore. His scraggly blond hair hung in his eyes. His t-shirt clung to his skinny chest. He made no effort to hide the limp. He just grinned as sang the refrain of an old Fugazi song, "That's the price you pay, for hoping every slip's not a slide."

—Sean Carswell

ENDNOTE: Gorsky Press just published a collection of short stories written by me. It's called *Barney's Crew*. You can get it at www.gorskypress.com or www.razorcake.com, or at your local bookstore. If you like my stories, please buy my book.



RAZORCAKE 35

MY EIGHTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

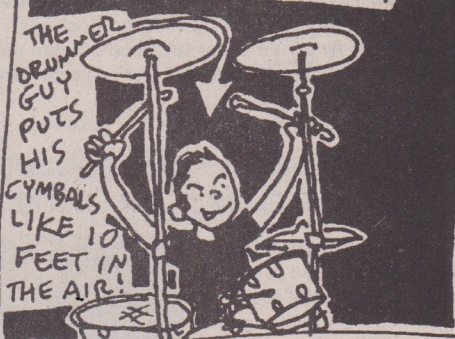
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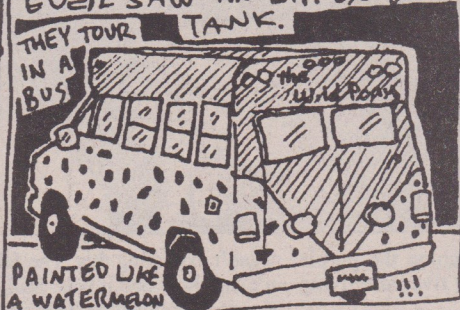
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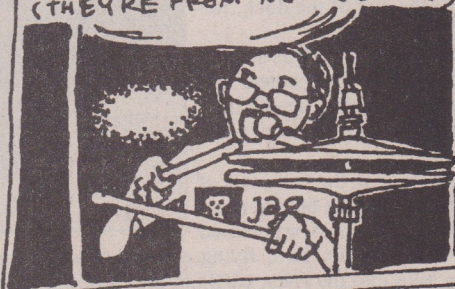
SEXY ARE LIKE THE BEST THING EVER. ARE THEY FROM OAKLAND OR PENSACOLA? THEY GOT ADDRESSES FOR BOTH ON THEIR LP. ON ONION FLAVORED RECORDS.



BENT OUTTA SHAPE ARE THE CUTEST LIL DIRTY BOYS FROM BROOKLYN YA EVER SAW AN L.P. ON DRUNK THEY TOUR TANK.



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ARMY OF JESUS ARE SOME RAD AUSTIN THRASH MASTERS. ALL THEY GOT IS A DEMO.



ALSO FROM AUSTIN ARE MY DEAR FRIENDS SIGNAL LOS DIG THEIR L.P. ON PRANK!



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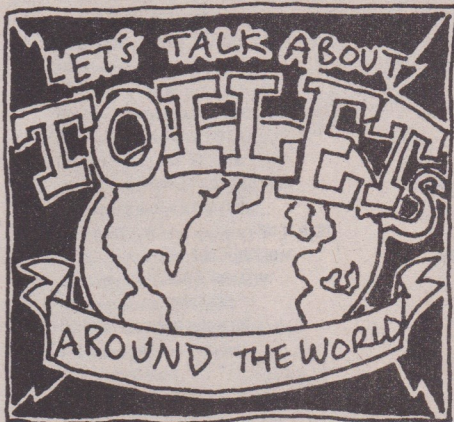
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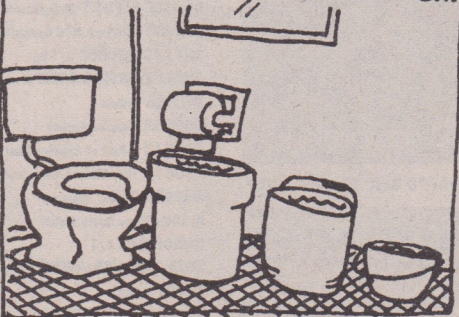
UP THE VOLTAGE ARE FROM SOMEWHERE IN CALIFORNIA. THEY PUT OUT THEIR OWN CD AND IT FUCKIN ROCKS!



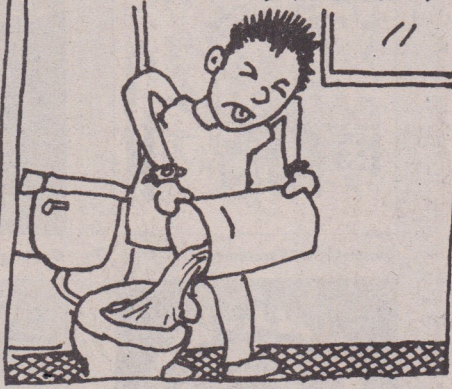
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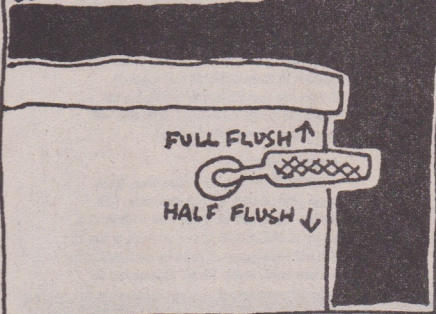
DOWN IN MEXICO, SOMETIMES YOU ONLY GET WATER FOR A FEW HOURS A DAY, SO YOU HAVE TO FILL UP BUCKETS...



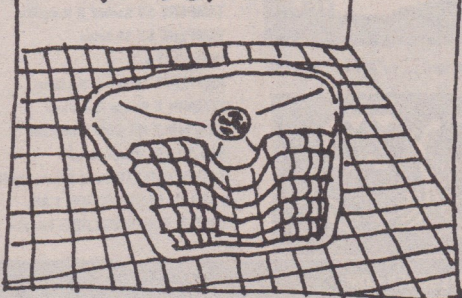
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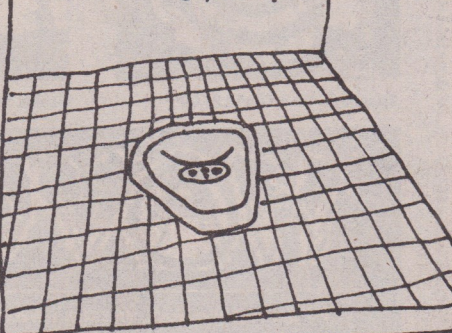
BRITISH TOILETS ARE ABOUT LIKE AMERICAN ONES, ONLY WITH A CHOICE!



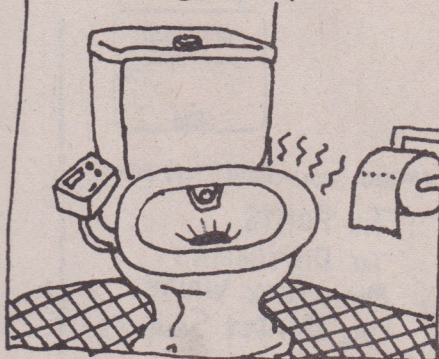
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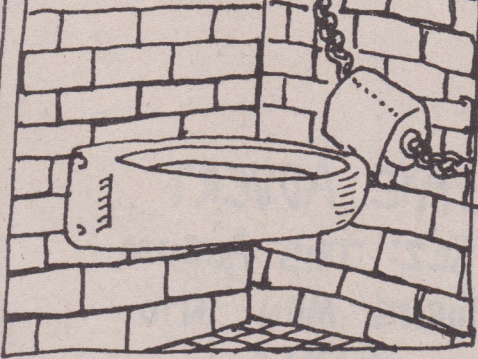
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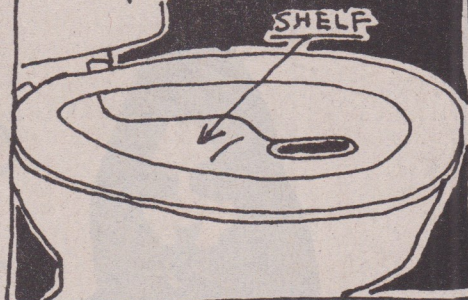
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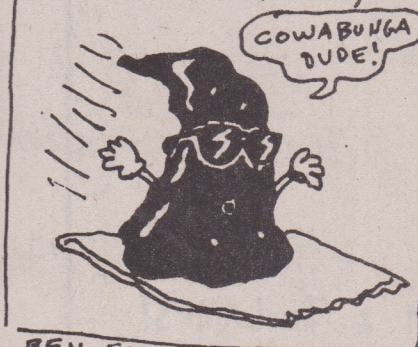
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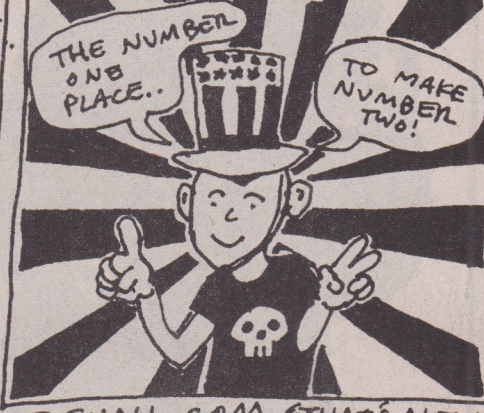
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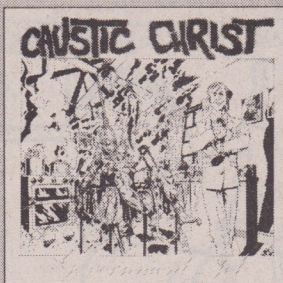


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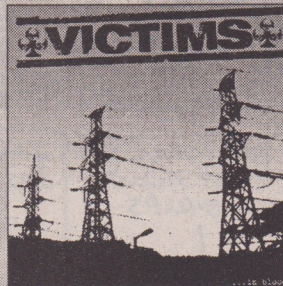
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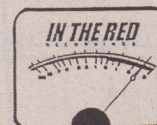


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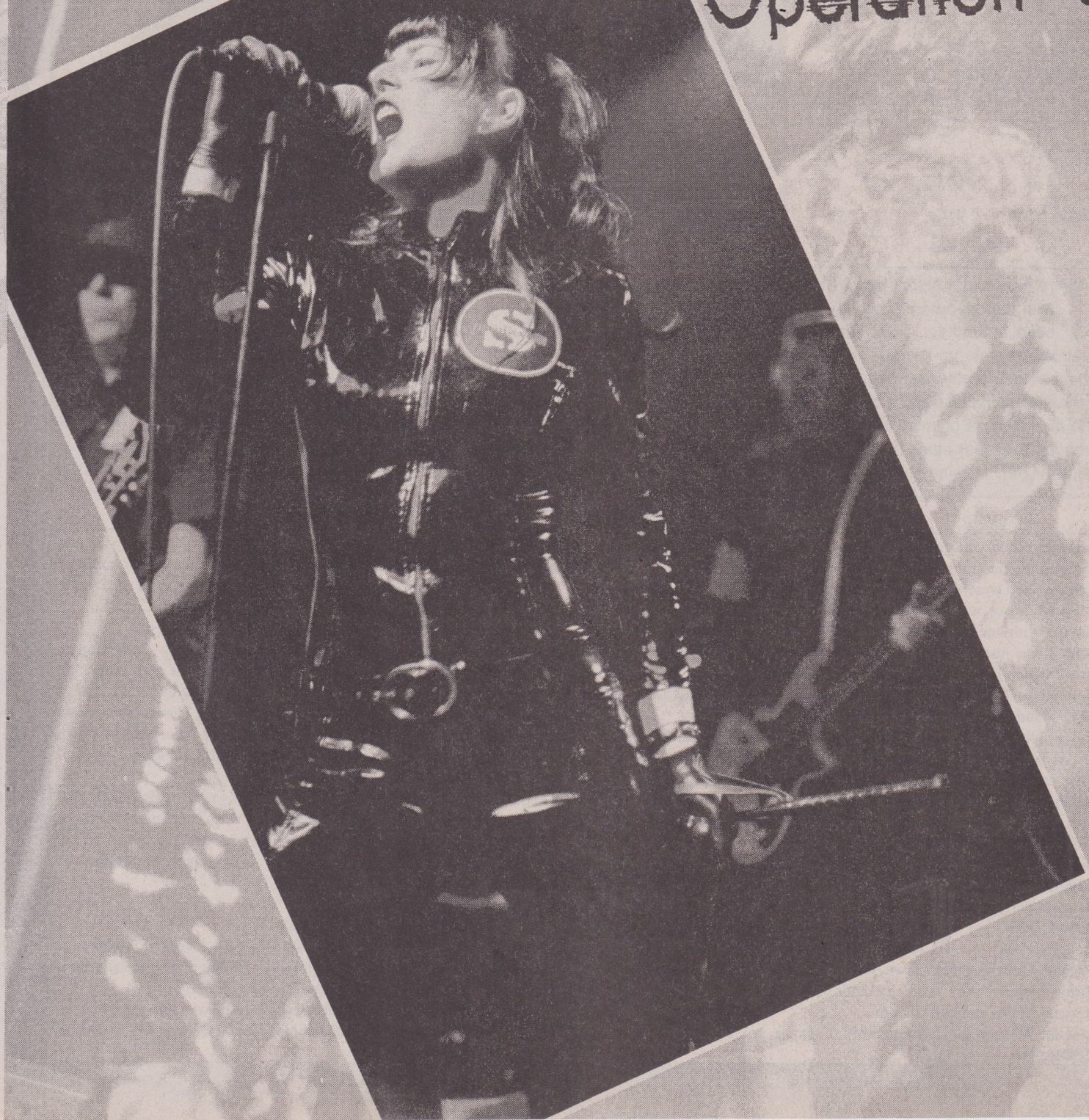


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NORTH LINCOLN

INTERVIEW BY
JANELLE JONES

PHOTOS BY
BROOKE LACKEY



Truth be told, I hadn't heard North Lincoln until just recently with their debut LP *Truth Is a Menace*, even though they've been around for years. Upon first listen, I was instantly grabbed by their fun-loving, spirited and melodic yet edgy and, at some points, pretty damn aggressive punk rock. And now, with their album's release and a big tour planned, this Michigan-based trio already have planned a great start to the New Year, which is wonderful, as they stand to initiate many others who, like me, were unfortunately missing out.

And North Lincoln isn't all these guys have their hands full with, either. *Au contraire*, in this "spider-web of bands" that is the Grand Rapids music scene, the three musicians—guitarist/vocalist Kevin Nunn, drummer John Massel, and bassist/vocalist Brian Beckwith—are each in a number of other bands as well, including two (the successful hardcore troupe Don Knotts and The Andorras, a Sweet Baby cover band) in which all three take part.

Janelle: When you guys first formed the band, you were all in other bands at the time. They were different styles than this?

Kevin: They weren't so much different styles, just... we all knew each other while we were playing in those other bands and then I started playing with one of John's bands and he asked me if I wanted to start a band. I was just like, "Yeah, why the hell not?" Then he got a hold of Brian, which is how it started.

Janelle: So, from the beginning you had an idea of what you guys wanted to sound like?

Kevin: No, we had no idea what we were gonna do. We started back in '99, so we were just learning how to play instruments; we had no idea what we were doing. The way we sound now, it doesn't sound *completely* different from when we started, it's just more developed and we've progressed. I guess it doesn't sound horribly different, but it doesn't sound really that much the same, either.

Janelle: So what were your early shows like?

Kevin: We just pretty much played anywhere we could. Our first show we sorta party-crashed on another show in our friend's basement. The second show was another friend's birthday party, in her bedroom. [Laughs] Pretty much did anything we could and they were always pretty small. One thing that's always sorta held on with our shows is that we always play any show with any kinds of bands. We end up playing a lot of metal shows and stuff like that.

Janelle: When you play those types of shows, you're well received?

Kevin: Surprisingly, yeah. Every time on the road when we actually end up getting there and realize what's going on, you feel sort of bummed because you think everyone's gonna hate us, and then a lot of times it works out and we end up getting some people liking us.

Janelle: What's North Lincoln like in the live environment?

Kevin: Sometimes we're really tight, sometimes we're pretty sloppy, but we're always looking to have some fun and have a good show. We put a lot of energy into our set; we're not just standing there. We always end up with a couple bruised lips or chipped teeth. Last summer I had to get a tooth replaced after one of our tours 'cause it got chipped down so much by the microphone. That wasn't fun, but... [laughs]

Janelle: So it gets a little hazardous at times...

Kevin: Yeah. We like to get into it. I think that's why we especially like playing shows in basements. We like to be very interactive. It's a lot more fun when people can be right there in your face.

Janelle: Do you have dental insurance or did you have to pay for that yourself?

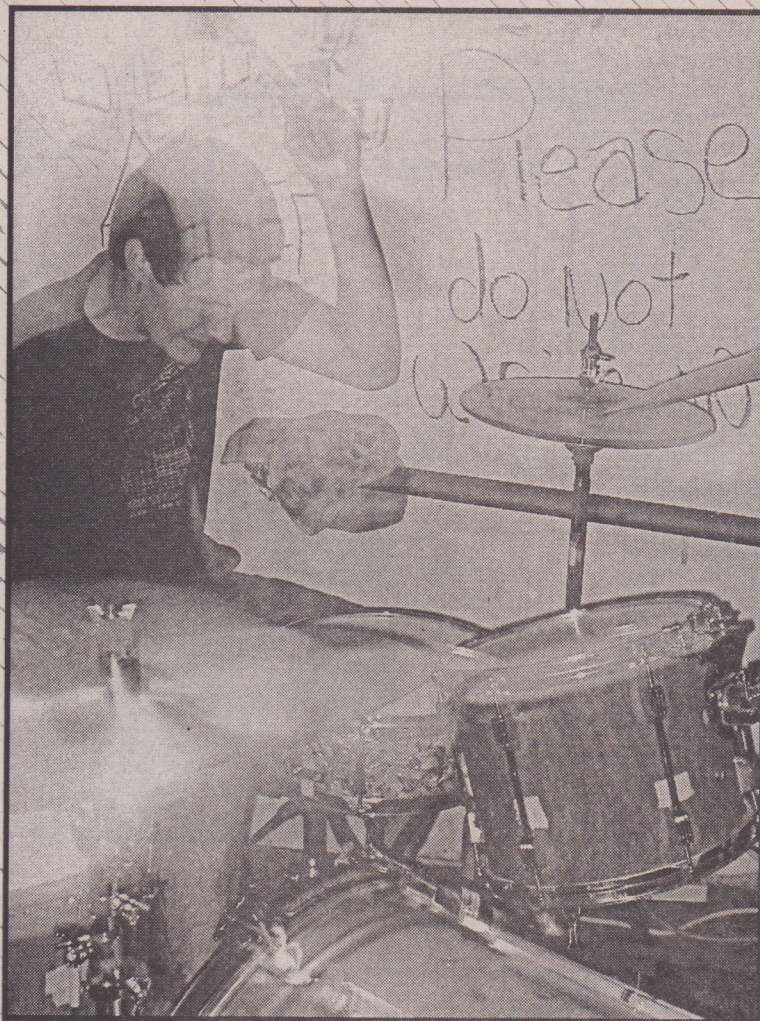
Kevin: I had to pay for it myself.

Janelle: Out of money you made on tour?

Kevin: No, I had to use money I'd saved up, which sucked. It was supposed to be my money that was going towards the down payment on a house... It's better than not being able to eat. [laughs]

Janelle: Did you have a lot of the tour left when you chipped it?

Kevin: Well, what happened was I chipped it at a show in Michigan and



WE ALWAYS END UP WITH A COUPLE BRUISED LIPS OR CHIPPED TEETH. LAST SUMMER I HAD TO GET A TOOTH REPLACED AFTER ONE OF OUR TOURS 'CAUSE IT GOT CHIPPED DOWN SO MUCH BY THE MICROPHONE.

then it slowly got chipped time and time again over a bunch of shows. I didn't even think anything was really wrong with it, but when I saw it in the mirror for the first time when we got back, I was like, "Eh, I should probably get it checked out." And then when I got it checked out, the dentist was just like, "You need to get that fixed right away 'cause that thing's gonna fall out." But it wasn't all at one show. It's the one tooth I always used to hit every time I'd go to sing into the mic.

Janelle: You guys are pretty—I don't wanna say proud—but you guys are really into where you're from.

Kevin: Yeah, totally. When we get a lot of the reviews and stuff like that, it's funny because people say we have the "Gainesville sound." [laughter] But, you know, North Lincoln is the Grand Rapids sound—the way a lot of the stuff sounds up here. We based the band heavily on the town 'cause we've been around for so many years now and all our main support comes from all our friends and family in Grand Rapids. We're very dedicated to where we come from. We love this town. It's the main foundation of who we are.

Janelle: What makes it so great to you?

Kevin: What's a good way to put it? The scene here's not full of the bullshit that's in a lot of towns. Sometimes the shows in a lot of the other bigger cities and whatnot, there's so much bullshit going on that sometimes it's hard to enjoy the show. And around here, everyone's just out looking for a good time.

It's just a great little scene sorta hidden away in Michigan that not that many people know about.

Janelle: Are there a lot of places to play?

Kevin: No, not at all. We're talking a maximum of two DIY spaces, a coffee shop, and one or two bars is all we have going on, but most of the time it doesn't really matter. You can pretty much set up a show anywhere if you're booking it, which is pretty nice. Back a few years ago when ska had blown up pretty huge, Grand Rapids had a really huge scene going on, so it was sorta nice. Before North Lincoln, we were still playing in those other bands and there were tons of kids at every show. And then right around the time we started North Lincoln there was a big drop-off in music and the scene in this town. There was nothing. It was like that for two or three years, where the most people you'd get at a show was twenty, tops. It was pretty bad. Then it slowly started picking back up once we got new venues and stuff rolling in. Now it's great. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Janelle: As for the city itself, are there any downsides?

Kevin: Yeah, every city has its downside. There's always something wrong with any town. I called Var two nights ago when I was at work like, "Oh, what are you doing?" I was just shooting the shit with him, and he's like, "Ah man, it's so cold down here!" And it's funny 'cause I sorta paused. He's like, "Oh shit. Isn't it like ten below up in Grand Rapids?" "Yeah." [laughs]

Janelle: Yeah, what was it down there, fifty, sixty?

Kevin: Yeah, it was fifty-five there and negative four here when I talked to him. But that really doesn't even count as a downside to this town. You know, I can't think of any downside of living in this town. I guess sometimes you wish there were more people around to come to the shows and stuff. It's the biggest town in Michigan, but we're not huge; a sixty-person turnout at a show is a huge success for a show here. But yeah, there's no downside to living here.

Janelle: What would you like people to know about North Lincoln?

Kevin: One of the things I'm most proud of with the band is we put a lot of heart and thought in the lyrics in a time when it seems like a lot of bands don't. The things we say, the things we write about, we wholeheartedly live by. We really live strongly by what we're saying through our songs. That's one of my favorite things about this band.

Janelle: Does everyone have a say in the lyrics?

Kevin: Yeah, completely. We had a song on one of our first CDs that one of our friends wrote. She wasn't in the band; she just wanted to get her messages out with that song. Brain and I flow back and forth between lyrics. John's written a couple songs lyrically. One of the main things with our lyrics is we write songs for everyone and songs that anyone can relate to. When you read the lyrics, you're not seeing a lot of songs where it's "I"; we use a lot of "we," "us," "together." Yeah, lyrics are very important, but we're completely open to anything about them.

Janelle: What song did your friend write?

Kevin: It was a song called "Just Remember." It was the first thing we recorded. Some local guy wanted us to do a CD so we recorded twelve songs and it's on that, but it's pretty much impossible to find.



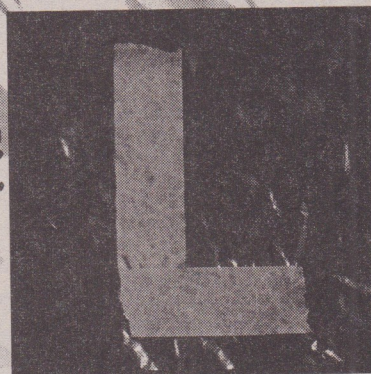
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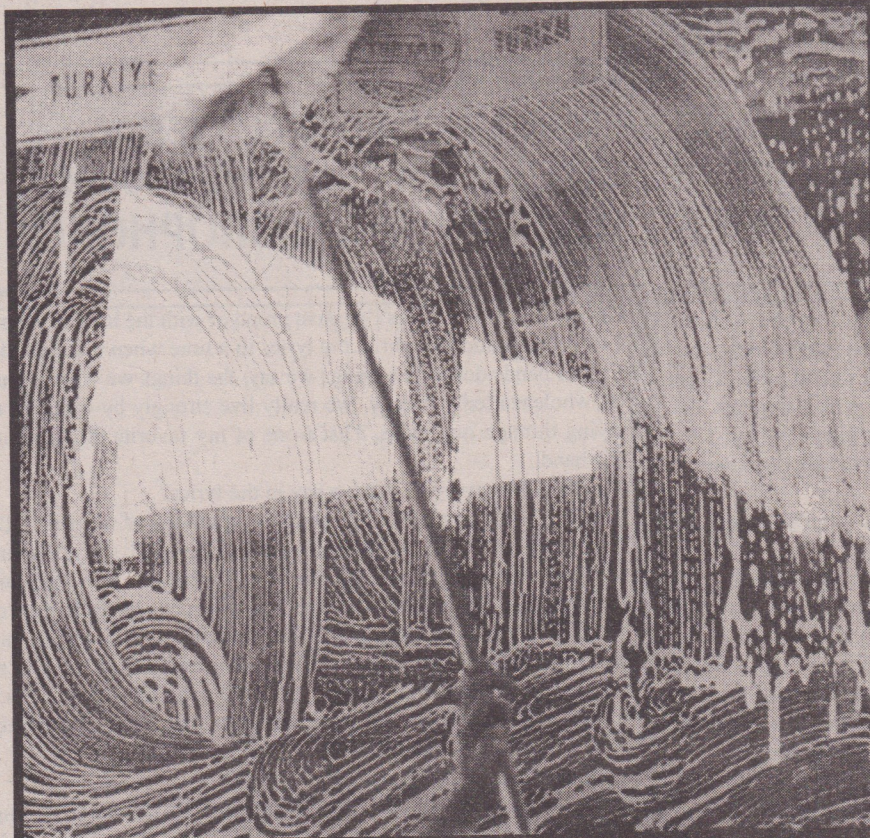


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Janelle: What's it about?

Kevin: She was actually quite older and she was going through a divorce and one of her children was really sick, and she had just written about what she was going through at the time, trying to not get too down about it.

Janelle: The way it's written, is it like what you do with the "we" so that everyone can relate to it?

Kevin: Yeah, that song's written the same way, a very open song where just by reading it you might not get exactly what the song's about, but you take something out of it that means something to you. The lyrics were really good. I asked her if I could use 'em and she said, "Yeah, no problem," so I just wrote music to go along with it.

Janelle: It'll be hard, but is there any one song in particular that, lyrically, really means more to you than the others?

Kevin: It's actually one of Brian's songs—"Satellite," the first song on the album—that's one of the political songs, but I think it's some of the best lyrics he's ever written. We've written so many fuckin' songs. [Laughs] It's so hard to think of. I have songs that might not mean that much to me but they just remind me of things. Like "Who's Counting Anyway" is one of the songs on the album. That song means a lot to me because it's a very Grand Rapids-based song, all the lyrics are about people at home. There's one on a 7" that was released last year called "Belt Buckles and High Waters," and that song was another one of Brian's where it's about how a lot of people going to shows now care less about the music and more just about the dumb aspects like how

people look and all that stupid stuff. I think that song really sums up the way you feel sometimes.

Janelle: Also, I was just wondering, did it take a while to come up with the band name?

Kevin: No. When we first started, we had another band name. [Pauses] I'm sorry. I totally forgot what it was. Oh man, I wish Brian was here. He'd know. But yeah, I think we played only two or three shows under that band name. It wasn't horrible; it was just sort of a little cheesy. We were just trying to come up with something new. At that point, I was starting college and flipping through textbooks or whatever, and I read about Martin Luther King Jr. and it was talking about one of his first speeches on North Lincoln Avenue, Washington, D.C. I was like, "That's sort of a cool band name." Somehow I ended up getting them to change it. They both hated it, though.

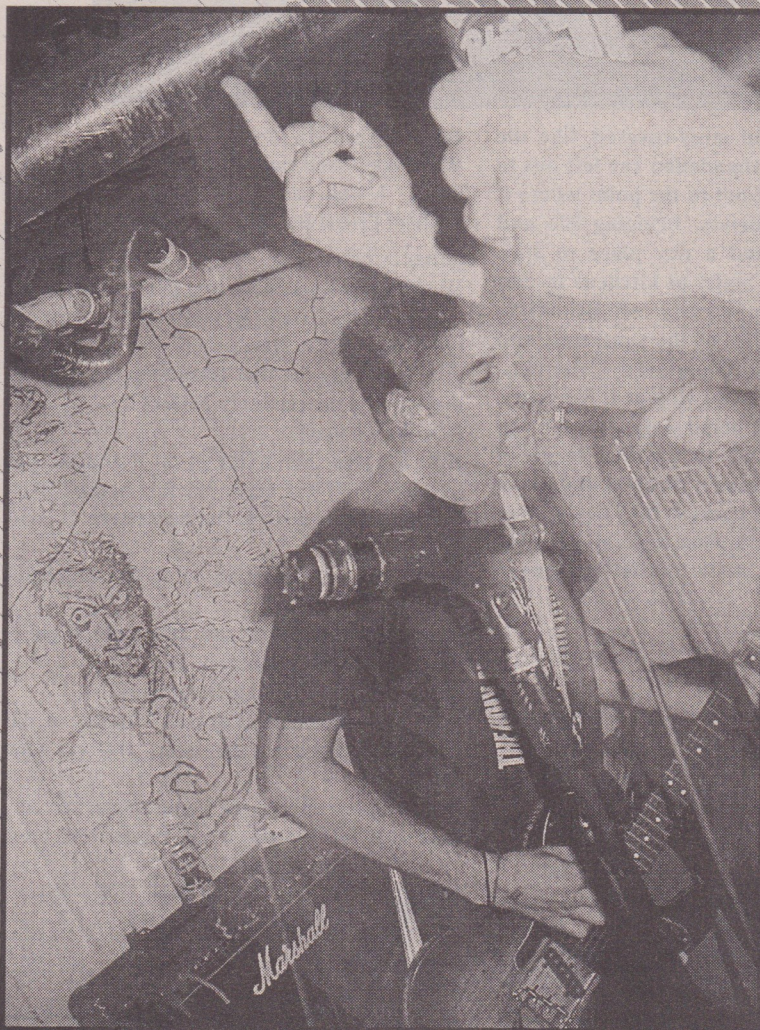
Janelle: They hated it?

Kevin: I think so. Someone didn't like it. I think most of our friends didn't, but now we can just rub it in their faces. [Laughs]

Janelle: Is it hard being in a band and being a father?

Kevin: Well, right now it hasn't really felt like it is, but we also haven't toured yet since she's been born, so I haven't had to experience the separation or anything like that. That March tour will be the first time I go away. It'll be interesting to see how it handles.

OUR FIRST SHOW WE SORTA PARTY-CRASHED ON ANOTHER SHOW IN OUR FRIEND'S BASEMENT. THE SECOND SHOW WAS ANOTHER FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, IN HER BEDROOM.



Janelle: Has being a father changed your outlook or your worldview or anything like that?

Kevin: Yeah, totally. I think one of the things I just sorta realized was with the elections back in November. I was always political, but it was always the main points that everybody follows, and after I had my daughter, it's like you start realizing a lot of the local government issues like state- and city-wise and all stuff like that are all the things that matter and nobody even pays attention to that's really gonna fuck shit up for our kids. I follow the local government more closely, try to pay attention to that stuff. What was the other thing you said?

Janelle: Just your outlook on life.

Kevin: Well, it changes everything. It's so hard to put it into words. It changes everything in a really good way. I try to appreciate everything a lot more. We're getting ready to go back out in March and it's the first time I ever thought, "Man, I hope we don't get into an accident on the road," or anything like that. Before I never thought anything about that.

Janelle: Well, saying that, it must feel good to know that, with a child, you're so needed. You're so vital to this person.

Kevin: Yeah, someone's depending on me. But going on the road, that can make you really worried 'cause it's like, "What if we get in an accident? What if I don't make enough money to pay the house payment or the heat bill?" or anything like that. It makes you take a lot closer look at what we're trying to do. It makes me wanna play that much more 'cause it'd be nice to have it at that point where when she gets older she can respect what I've been trying to do with my life. It makes me wanna play that much more and makes me appreciate it that much more that I get to play. I don't even know if that makes sense.

Janelle: Yeah, I really think it does.

<http://www.northlincoln.cjb.net/>



FEDERATION X

Interview by **BD Williams**

Pictures by **Funzilla**



I have never been punched in the face before. But I have balled up my tiny fingers into a tangerine-sized fist and hurled it at my little brother's head. I am familiar with the anxiety and adrenaline that gushes from your guts to your arm, shooting out from your knuckles. Then there's the euphoria afterwards. Oh, the euphoria! That's how it feels when you see Federation X live. It feels like beating up on someone who is smaller and weaker than you and being completely unapologetic about it. Their two four-string guitars create a heavy chaos brought on by the thumping of your heart and the throbbing in your head. The beat burrows its way through the soft crevices in your brain, leaving you with no remorse and on the hunt for more defenseless kids. You watch the band maneuver between spurts of songs and you smile through the sweat that stings your eye. Oh, the euphoria! —Funzilla

Federation-X comes from a land of rain, clouds, lakes, cold, and more rain—the Pacific Northwest. Their sound is dark and

damp, dripping and moss-covered, like the interior of an old abandoned car left out to rot. It is heavy, but not to the point where it doesn't move. It drives, bringing life and motion, warmth and a dry place to stay. From Washington State, to kitchens in San Francisco, to the streets of Brooklyn, through the humidity of the southeast, and along the beaches of Southern California, Federation-X has been going at it for years. Breaking out of the home state with the van breaking down—and all seeming to go in opposition—they make it through and make it better. Maybe it's because they never seem to worry or look for a place to screw up; they seem to move and make music like magic. —BD

Interview conducted inside the House of Pies

BD: What are your names and what do you play?

Bill: [to Ben] You start first, since you were born first.

Ben: Naw, I wasn't born first.

Beau: I was born first.

Bill: Okay, well then you were born first. Ah wait... I was born first. Okay. My name is William Ernest Badgley, a.k.a. Dirty-Bill. I play guitar. November 29th 1976, Yakima, Washington. I was born to a piano teacher and road worker... well, he wasn't a road worker until much later. He worked in a cemetery at that time. I am the first generation out of three that's not in the cemetery business.

BD: Why's that?

Bill: My dad didn't like to do it and he was retired when I was born. The first house I lived in was on the cemetery. But they weren't tied to that.

BD: What was your dad doing for the cemetery?

Ben: Bill's trying to say he's been digging graves since the day he was born.

BD: Have you been digging graves?

Bill: Just metaphorical graves. I'm out of the literal cemetery business—okay, who was born next?

Beau: Zorbatron. Drums. Outer space. Period.

Ben: Ben Wildenhaus, a.k.a. BamBooza, born in Ohio. Guitar.

BD: You're not from outer space? You don't dig graves?

Ben: No. Catholic farmers.

Bill and Beau: He's a biplane pilot. [Ben's wearing a scarf and what looks like an old leather pilot's flight cap.]

Beau: [in reference to Ben's mustache] Your upper lip gets really cold flying a biplane.

BD: There was something said last night to Funzilla about a stolen butt? Care to explain?

Bill: Well, I was telling Funzilla that Ben was on a fact-finding mission in Peru, and he fell in league with some risky prostitutes who stole his butt. He tried to buy it back last Christmas on eBay but lost the bid by a dollar. In response to that he says, "What one loses," [points to his ass] "one gains." [points to the 'stache]

Ben: That's why I now wear belts.

BD: How did Fed-X come about?

Ben: Beau and I approached Bill—we had met when we were in high school—through the Vanek Family...

BD: Who's that?

Bill: Ian (Japanther), Josh...

Ben: Ian, his brother, then Matt was in the Way Downs. Josh has the label called Wantage Records.

Bill: Yeah, they lived next door to me in Yakima when we were like fifteen, and me and Ian and Matt were in a band together called the Play Doctors. Then later on we were in a band called Clever and Josh put out his first cassette single. It was us (The Clevers) and another band. It was funny 'cause Ian's mom would solve all of our band problems. We would want Ian to play certain parts and she would make Ian play it.

Beau: Ben and Ian and I were in a band in high school called the Teamsters and we broke up. Then I came to Bellingham, and Ben was already here and we continued to play music together, but we didn't have a band going. We were just kinda messing around. The first incarnation had Kevin Borden playing drums and I was playing guitar and singing, which I had done in the Teamsters, but then I decided that I wanted to switch to drums, and Ben and I had made this demo tape at a local studio. We were kind of thinking about who else could be in the band and he mentioned that Bill was in town and he knew him from back in the day. So he gave him the tape and we went down and practiced, and it just clicked.

BD: What year was that?

Beau: That was spring of '98, I'd say. I think we all kind of knew that the chemistry was right, when at the first practice... Ben and Bill were each using guitars, that not only had four strings, but they only four tuning pegs. Out of pure coincidence, and we were like okay...

BD: So that was never intentional?

Beau: Yeah, and still, to this day, they've never used more than four strings.

Ben: We also knew we were right together when we all tried to solder strings together.

Bill: We were breaking strings in those early practices. We were practicing in the lounge at the college.

Ben: The student lounge.

BD: So you were

Ben: We do everything the most difficult way possible.

Bill: That's a good point to bring up. That's one of the reasons I always wanted to stick with this situation, is that you can try as hard as you want. Try to be as smart as you want, but you will always fuck up. But for some reason we've gotten totally lucky and everything seems to work out.

Beau: I think it's that other people are always covering our asses.

Bill: A philosophy?
Ben: "Don't be us." That's what our van says on the front. It's proven pretty true.



practicing on the campus?

Beau: Yeah, in the student lounge of the dorm I was living in. Hours be damned.

Bill: We're walking in and yelling and tying strings together...

Beau: People are coming in to get their mail...

Ben: We were all totally retarded and that sort of efficiency has continued to this day.

Bill: I remember we were trying to solder a string, and we couldn't get the solder on the joint of the string, so we'd pile the solder before where the joint was and up till it reached the joint. So it rose above where the string was snapped, and included the connection. It was a pile of solder.

Beau: I didn't know that you were supposed to heat the thing you were soldering.

Bill: We didn't figure that out till later.

Ben: The good thing is that we haven't learned really almost anything since then. [laughter]

Beau: Nothing ever works.

Ben: It's also that we're pretty good at dealing with—whatever.

Bill: Plus we are extremely lucky. And optimistic.

Beau: And have really good friends.

BD: How long did the practicing in the lounge go for?

Bill: After that first tour we found some other places.

Beau: Some basements here and there.

BD: So when you came together you had two four-string guitars. You couldn't solder strings together. What determined the sound you were going for?

Bill: I don't think we ever talked about it.

Beau: I think we all just had the same thing in mind, which is heavy, loud rock. I mean, it's not some magic formula. That's our background. We grew up listening to loud and heavy bands,

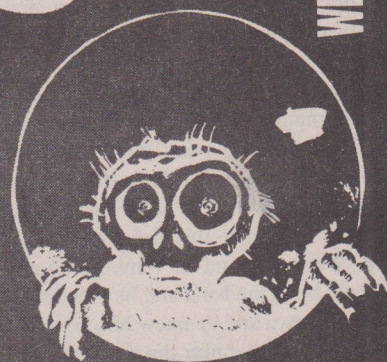
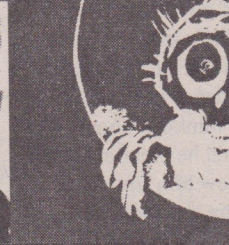
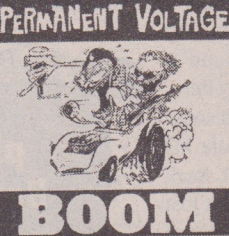
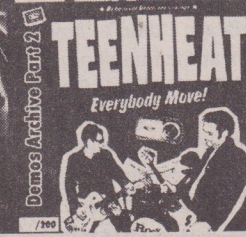
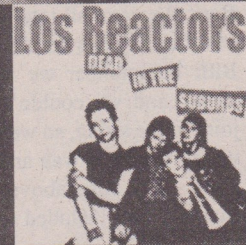
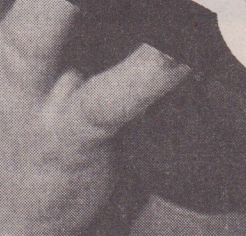
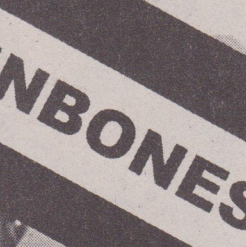
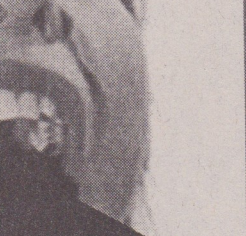
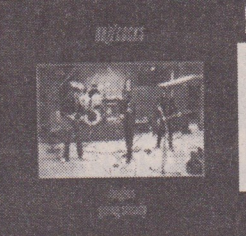
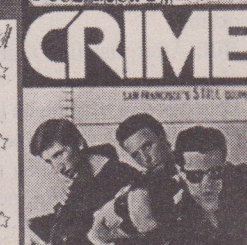
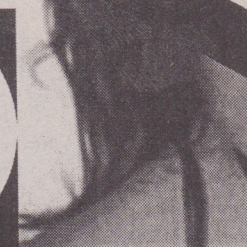
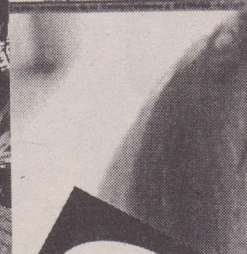
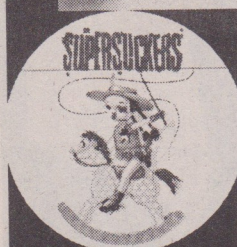
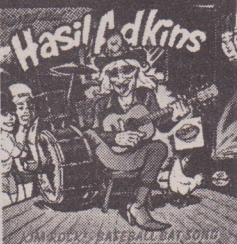
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you know. We were pretty heavily influenced by that.

BD: You cover a Budgie song ("Nude Disintegrating Parachutist Woman," one-song 7" first half of song side one, second half side two, on Wantage USA).

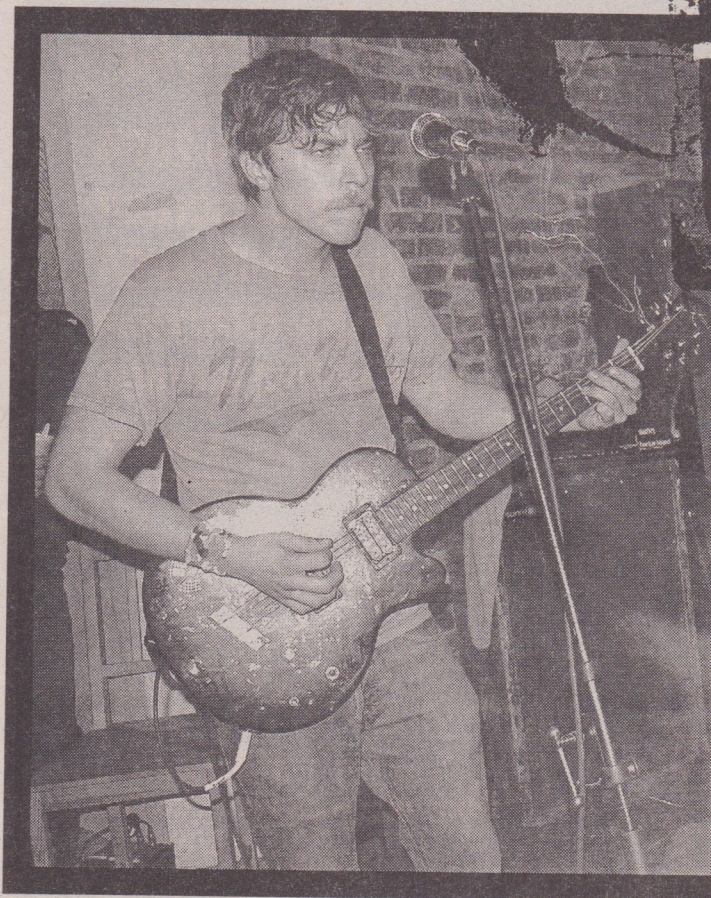
Bill: Well, Budgie wasn't until later.

was another one that was right there. And not just hard rock, Built to Spill and Pavement, those are bands that I like a lot. [Pointing to Ben] This guy listens to a lot of country and western... jazz piano and all that. There's a rich tapestry in there, but we just sort of

BD: How did the name Federation-X come about?

Bill: I think the way they tell the story is a little misleading, because

Beau: Nothing ever works.
Ben: We do everything the most difficult way possible.



Beau: Budgie's from Belgium or something, but we had bands in our back yards that were top-rung heavy bands. Obviously, Karp comes to mind. That was the band that Ben and I particularly would watch just about every other weekend. You see a band like that and you're kind of like, "Oh my god." That was the kind of music we wanted to make, you know, without ripping them off. We were influenced by that. Everyone's influenced by something, and that's the kind of stuff we grew up with. So that's the kind of shit we listened to.

Bill: I didn't live in Olympia so we used to drive four hours to go see Karp on the weekends.

Beau: There were a lot of other bands we listened to coming up: Shellac, Jesus Lizard, Unwound

came from a rock background. Teamsters was a thrashy, almost punk band. There was a punk phase for a while.

BD: How is it with Estrus? Because you, to me, sound different from a lot of other Estrus bands.

Beau: Yeah. We're kind of an anomaly.

Bill: He (Dave Crider) just wanted to put it out. We hooked up with the Cherry Valence quite a bit and the Fireballs of Freedom.

Beau: And just being in that town (Bellingham) and just getting to know Dave.

Ben: Carl, too.

BD: What about with Wantage? Who runs that?

Ben: Josh.

Bill: Ian's older brother.

BD: Who runs Tapes Records?

Ben: That's Ian.

it sounds like the name came about before I was in the band. I never really felt that way, because we didn't have the name until our first show. We were playing a show and we didn't have a name. We were playing this sports bar in Yakima and the guy said he would only do it if we had a flyer. So I stayed to deal with the guy and they went to make a flyer.

Beau: Yeah, we just saw a window sticker going up to the copy store, and we just randomly chose a sticker that said Fed-X—you know without the "E," only the "X," so we thought, "What about Fed-X?" And we were like, "Yeah, whatever." So we stole the window sticker, photographed it onto the flyer, and put it on my bass drum.

BD: So the name was originally Fed-X?

Beau: It evolved into Federation-X, just to get away from the whole Federal Express thing.

BD: So you weren't trying to pull-off a Generation X extreme sports kind of thing?

Beau: No.

Ben: [joking] Well, we used to.

Bill: We did bungee.

Ben: We used to bungee jump a lot. But that was back when we used to work out together. We used to pump iron all the time together.

BD: Bill [wearing a headband and sleeveless shirt] looks like he's ready to go jogging here...

Beau: He just looks like it.

BD: So the Federation-X name came from a trip to a copy store.

Ben: Well, the first actual show we played was the day before the sports bar. We had a Yakima show...

Bill: It was?

Ben: Yeah.

Bill: Okay.

Ben: And one of Bill's old friends from Yakima...

Beau: It was on the same day.

Bill: Maybe on the same day.

Ben: That was at a house that the bank had repo'd from somebody's mom. It was in some neighborhood on the outskirts of Yakima. We just went there and somehow found a key and played two songs and ran away.

Bill: A neighbor called the police and we threw all the equipment in the back of Ben's car, which around this time we were starting to ruin. And that went on for years. We painted it all up and toured in it. It was a '57 Impala.

Ben: We tried to guild it—you know, bronze it. We spray-painted the whole thing gold.

Bill: The inside and out. The garbage, the cigarette butts everything. We took all the garbage out, painted the interior, then painted all the garbage, and put all the garbage back in.

Ben: We were going to take photos of it. So we kept it around. We left it over at Bill's old house. The original plan was that we were going to put it in the demolition derby, but the tranny was gone. Hans, the guy living in Bill's old place, told me that if I didn't move it out of his parking space he was going to push it out into the street. I didn't really believe him. But when we got back from tour, he had smashed the entire car up to pieces with a skateboard on a couple of drunken rampages. I think he took two different sessions on it with some buddies. The top of the car was completely pushed down into the interior of the car.

BD: So what came of that?

Ben: I don't know. I think he got it towed. It disappeared one day.

BD: Is there any philosophy with Federation-X?

FEDERATION-X



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Bill: A philosophy?

Beau: We shall do what we must.

Ben: "Don't be us." That's what our van says on the front. It's proven pretty true.

Bill: I say we don't worry very much, so we don't run into a lot of problems, despite that we should by the fact that we don't worry our way into it.

BD: How is it now, being that the band is split between Bellingham, Washington, and Brooklyn, New York? Ben and Beau in Bellingham and Bill in Brooklyn? And what's up with the "B"?

Ben: There's a ridiculous amount of B's in our band. Here we go.

Beau: Boring, but Badass.

Bill: We use the time apart and distance to work on other projects in between.

Ben: Basically...

BD: What's that?

Beau: We're just answering your question. It's basically bodacious, but boring.

Ben: We played our first bar show at the 3-B.

Beau: And we play in a band.

Bill: We're from Bellingham and we're all boys.

Ben: Bellingham, Brooklyn, broken down. Our very first roadie was named Ben...

Beau: We're all buttholes.

Ben: And then recently we had a roadie named Ben Cody. That makes it...

Beau: Two Bens, a Bill, and a Beau.

Ben: Ben, Ben, Bill, and Beau, since the beginning.

Bill: It's really about how ridiculous you want us to get with this.

Beau: Banana. Banana is my favorite word.

Ben: Bicycles and a lot of boobies and bras and bouncing butts.

BD: You're filming a video?

Bill: For a song called "Hatched Man." It's a story that takes place in a song about somebody in Bellingham. And it's about a serial killer that comes to stalk and kill the person in the song. But really what happens is a small town guy cracks from too much alcohol and that kind of life. So we're shooting all these scenes with this tall, willowy character with cuts all over his hands and face. We're shooting all the scenes twice, so sometimes he's grappling with the character, and sometimes he's losing it.

BD: I'm not too familiar with the first LP y'all put out, but from the second one, *American Folk Horror*, to *X-Patriot*, there seems to be a shift.

Bill: *X-Patriot* is more like a show, more psychological, and the second record is more like a concept album.

BD: So what is the direction that Fed-X is heading now?

Beau: It's going to be shorter. A lot shorter.

BD: [to Bill] You've been acting as sort of a cheerleader the past few shows. Are you writing cheers?

Bill: I just said that last night.

Beau: I think the new song should be called "Jail Bait."

Bill: Isn't jail bait when you have sex with an underage girl?

Beau: Well, that's what you call an underage girl.

Bill: I haven't finished writing the lyrics for that one.

Ben: We've found that when Bill just sings and does a little more of the frontman shenanigans it gets people a little more riled up. But I think our songwriting has been crafted a little better.

Bill: Last year was the first time we'd ever practiced with a microphone at all.

Ben: We used to just write the songs and then afterwards Bill would improvise vocals. In the beginning, the vocals were always different. For the first couple of tours he was singing different lines each night.

Bill: Even the vocals that ended up on that first record were like that.

Ben: Then he started writing with the story to fit the music. Now we've finally come to a point where we practice with a microphone and we work on ideas. I think we're finally working on music that's involving guitar riffs...

Beau: We're developing time signatures, tempos, rhythms, melodies, guitar strings...

BD: So how does the music writing get done?

Bill: It depends. Sometimes Beau brings a song. Sometimes I do. Sometimes Ben. Then we have ones that we write all together.

Ben: Sometimes they come out of wicked jams.

Beau: Anytime someone comes with an idea, it's bound to happen that the rest of the band is going to be thinking about it and it's going to take a mind of its own.

Bill: Well, that's not true. You [Beau] bring a few songs that are never tampered with.

Beau: I can think of one.

Bill: We have two in the set.

BD: Is that what's going on? Zorbatron is writing the songs?

Bill: No. I'm just saying that when he brings a song, it's done.

Beau: Not necessarily. You make it sound like I'm some kind of fascist dictator.

Ben: Come on, guys.

Beau: It's not my fault the songs are perfect. I like to think of it as collaborative. It starts with an idea and then builds from there, most of the time.

Bill: Typically collaborative.

Ben: Except when Beau beats the hell out of us. And then we usually do what he says. Beau has endless sarcasm.

Beau: I tend to rub people the wrong way a lot because I have dry sense of humor and it can be pretty caustic.

Ben: Some people take "Fuck off and die" seriously.

Beau: I'm not vengeful really... although I kind of am. [To me] But I like you okay. I guess.

www.federationx.us

FEDERATION-X



RAZORCAKE 49

HOT SNAKES

Interview by Josh
Photos by Dan Monick



I bought the first Hot Snakes album, *Automatic Midnight*, on a whim the night before my senior exams started. From a scholastic standpoint, it was a bad move. It was edgy, angular, and much too addictive to waste my time doing stuff like studying or sleeping. But from a musical standpoint, sweet merciful Christ: raw, blasting punk rock that simultaneously shredded my speakers and dismantled much of what I thought about music at that point. A rock and roll spine to keep it focused. A nervous twitch to keep it interesting. Weirdness creeping in from all sides. Was arty music

supposed to burn your eyebrows off? Was rock'n'roll *supposed* to get lyrically deeper than "Oh yeah, oh no, I'm a misanthrope"? How did this happen?

But the story gets better. A few years passed. Their sound congealed. They're not so much a band as they are four interconnected brains and gnashing limbs. They're a white-hot punk rock fungus seeping into your brain and gluing themselves to your record player.

Their pedigree is as confusing as it is impressive: John and Mario are in Rocket from the Crypt, John and Rick were in

Pitchfork and Drive Like Jehu, Gar was in Fishwife and Tanner, and John also plays in the Sultans and runs Swami Records. The great thing about Hot Snakes, though, is that you can forget about all the details, the extra baggage of "ex-members of such and such." Just listen to the pounding and feel your mind start to melt.

The Hot Snakes are:

Rick: vocals, guitar

John: guitar

Gar: bass

Mario: drums

Josh: What's kept you guys involved in underground music for so long?

John: As far as being into music, what's kept me involved in music is that I like playing music. As far as underground music, a lot of the more exciting sounds that are being created usually don't appeal to the large majority of people. I've found that most of the time, the most exciting stuff that's happening is happening on a level that's a bit more underground, neglected.

Josh: Earlier you mentioned the Marked Men. What was the last record you heard that really excited you?

John: I hear exciting stuff everyday. Most of it isn't new, although it is new to me. I really like the stuff that Honest Jon's put out, like Candi Staton, Cedric Im Brooks and the Light of Saba, and the Calypso comp they did a couple years back. The new Michael Yonkers, *It's Only Yonkers*, is surprisingly excellent. Black Time are a new band from London that have an LP out that really smokes. Mr. Airplane Man, Gris Gris, Lost Sounds, and obviously everything on Swami. There's a lot of cool shit happening right now that makes it great to be breathing.

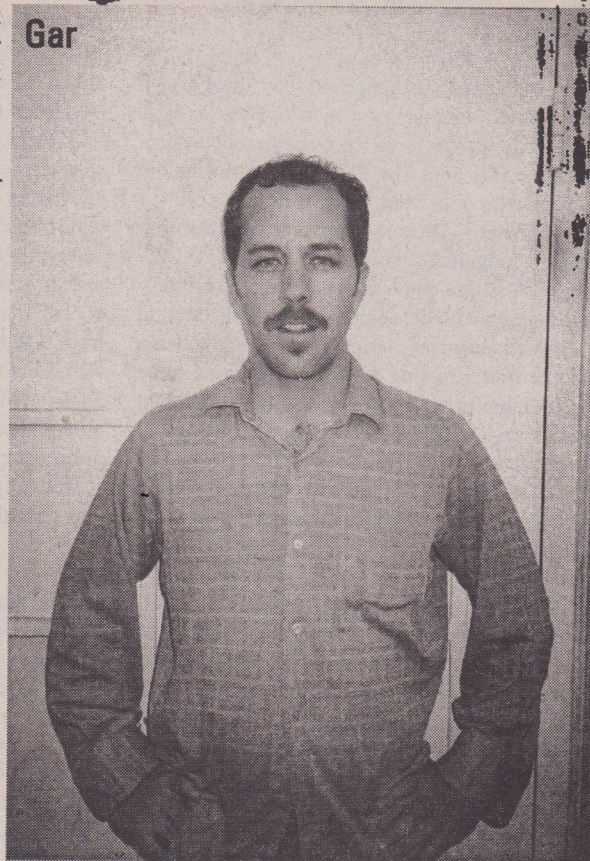
Josh: Can you think of any bands that you've seen come and go that didn't really get their due?

John: There's tons. I don't think you've got enough pages in your magazines to talk about all the great bands that never got their due, and the bands that did probably didn't get as much as they deserved, in some cases. There's been a lot of great music that just doesn't connect with people until after the band breaks up or years later, because they're ahead of their time, they're doing something that doesn't really relate to people, but when people have distance from it, they can appreciate how awesome it was.

Josh: Why did you think it was important to reissue the Testors and Crime?

John: I think both records are very clear and obvious examples of some of the finest rock and roll ever made. Not only are they cherished artifacts from an irreplaceable punk past, but they tower over practically anything that has been muttered since. To be involved with music that has such a profound personal importance to me is the only reason why I put records out at all.

Gar



Seeing as I spend most of my time nude or partially clothed, I was pretty numb.

John



Josh: Are there any other bands that you're trying to reissue?

John: I am currently working on a complete Nerves retrospective and a CD reissue of the Penetrators with their videos included.

Josh: Has it been expensive to buy back the rights to your old albums from Interscope?

John: No. They have been very cool about the whole thing.

Josh: It doesn't seem like there was much of a precedent for what you guys started doing, with bands like Pitchfork and Fishwife. What was it that inspired you guys to make music like that that was kind of odd for its time?

John: I don't think we thought of it as being odd. They were just our high school bands. For me, I guess it was seeing Battalion of Saints from San Diego, since they were from our hometown, and seeing how they were better than most, if not all, the bands they would open for, the bands that were supposedly bigger bands from out of town, from England or LA, and they would just smoke everybody. It started a feeling of,

"Oh, wow, there's something happening here."

When I was young, I always thought the bands that would play parties were great, but they weren't necessarily on the same tier as a touring band. This is when I was very young and basically stupid. Seeing Battalion of Saints blow away everybody they played with was like, "These guys are from here and they're better than anyone. I want to do something like that." That was really inspiring.

Josh: Can you think of any records that aren't specifically punk rock but would maybe heighten your appreciation for punk rock and music in general?

John: I got to a certain age where I stopped listening to punk rock because it was totally stale. I thought it was basically repeating itself. A lot of people that were getting into it were way macho, and what I noticed in San Diego was that it was becoming everything that I hated. There was a lot of violence in San Diego, too. It was pretty hideous. I got out of it for a couple of years because I thought it was pretty lame, but then a whole new wave of bands came along. As far as stuff that isn't punk rock, I listen to a lot of Asian blues.

Josh: Asian blues? Tell me about that.

Mario: Psychedelic stuff.

John: Asian psychedelic blues. It was a big influence on this new record. Turkish, too.

Josh: Can you give me an example?

Mario: Basically, the big boom of music in the '60s and early '70s happened over there too, it just totally has their own kind of twist to it. A little more progressive for over there. Not progressive rock, but like Asian garage music and psychedelic music that has a weird take on it.

Josh: What's a Rome plow and why did you write a song about it?

Rick: A Rome plow is what the US military used, along with defoliants and stuff like that, to clear vast expanses of jungle in Vietnam to keep people from growing stuff there or living there or hiding out in the jungle and shooting at planes or whatever. It's a dumb analogy, I guess. It was a long time ago. At that time, living in California, it was my frustration with development, and ugly development... Are you from California?

Josh: No.

Rick: Okay, well, California used to look differently to me when I was younger. It's been sort of gradually, at an agonizingly slow pace, ruined by development. To me, at least. Just ugliness and shittiness and bad taste and I almost wish I had one of those fucking things so I could just plow the whole place under. I just didn't like seeing it go to shit.

Josh: So, you guys are familiar with Larry from *Genetic Disorder*?

All: Oh, yeah.

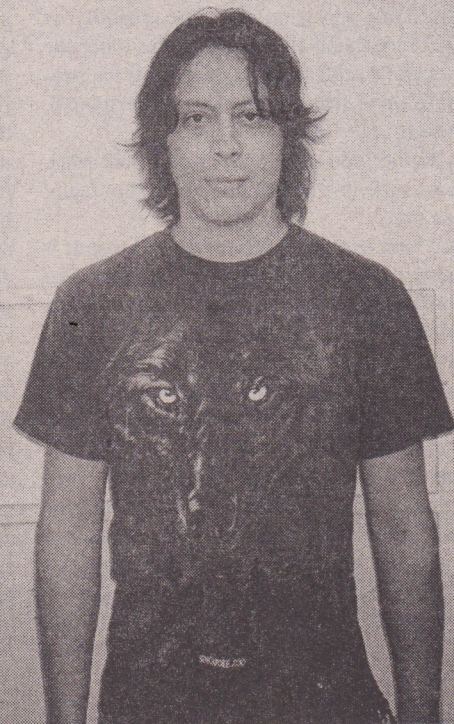
Josh: How would you describe his willingness to drink beer, to party?

John: Novice? Intermediate at best. He cleans the public pool down at the YMCA in San Diego. He works hard, so when he gets out on the weekend, he has two or three beers—actually it was wine coolers the last time I saw him—and really cuts loose. He's a party animal. I've seen him with the lampshade a couple of times. He stole a pizza from Thad (a friend of the band who was standing a few feet away).

Josh: You guys recorded the first album after two practices?

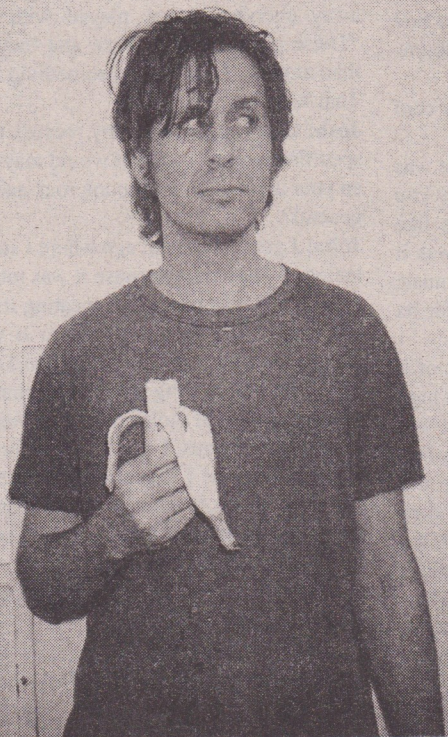
John: The first record? No, not really. It was a different band back then. We just recorded some stuff and sent the tapes out to Rick. He wrote some words for them and then came out to San Diego and sang them. We never thought we'd play live when we released that first record, and then after the first record, we thought, Oh, let's try to do this live. It'll be fun to play some shows. We kind of threw the band together after the fact. The new record (*Audit in Progress*) is the first time that, from the beginning, the whole thing was assembled as a group, whereas the first two were kind of

Mario



It started off with me thinking I could get rid of him if I did this fake fire. Unfortunately, it backfired.

Rick



ideas being sent back and forth on cassette.

Josh: And you played your first show after three practices?

John: That's true. But we already had the songs, so it was basically trying to learn the songs we'd already recorded. It's hard, because Rick lives in New York, I live in San Diego, and at the time, there was another guy in the band who lived in Philadelphia, so literally half the band was out there and half the band was out here on the west coast and we couldn't really practice. It wasn't that we only wanted to practice three times, it was just that we only could practice three times.

Josh: What does Rick do in New York?

John: Rick's an artist. He does his own personal stuff as well as commercial art.

Josh: Have you guys ever had any day jobs that were just so crappy that you couldn't wait to get out on tour?

John: I was a painter and it was the

lamest thing ever.

Josh: Like a house painter?

John: Yeah. It wasn't so much the work, just the chemicals.

Josh: A friend of mine told me to ask you guys about the Mountain Dew "Slam it!" story.

John: Oh, that's a Rocket From the Crypt thing. Mountain Dew asked Rocket From the Crypt if we would record a song for them and they offered us a lot of money, so we were like, okay. We were in the studio at that time anyway, so they gave us the Mel Torme song "I Get a Kick Out of You" and they wanted us to do a bastardized version of it. In the end, it was awesome. It couldn't have turned out any better. We got paid a lot of money to do this commercial that they never used, so no one ever heard it. But it was funny because the very corporate marketing executives were at the recording session wanting to be really nit-picky about everything, so we locked them out of the studio. No big deal. It was funny. They were very upset. One of the funniest things was that they had all these ideas, like, "We want you to say 'Slam it! Slam a Dew!'" That was going to be their new slogan, and I was like, "Well, you know, there is kind of a drug connotation with 'Slam a Dew.'" I kind of explained it to him, and he was really bummed, because it was obvious that

"Slam a Dew" was the product of half a year's worth of board meetings and discussions, so they were pretty bummed that I found flaws in their slogan.

Josh: Can you give me an example of a band that you really like endorsing something and it bummed you out? Like, Devo re-recorded "Whip It" for some floor cleaner commercial. Something like that.

John: Swiffer? Is that the one they did?

Josh: Yeah.

John: See, I use Swiffer. I think Swiffer's one of the best inventions of the century.

Mario: They're handy.

John: It's a total lazy dude's idea, so I'm into the Swiffer. If anything, that makes me like Devo even more, because they endorse a product that I actually use. There's things that you hear where you're like, "That's kinda cheesy," like the Clash are being used in some car commercial, and you know if Joe Strummer were alive, it would have never happened. If it were something really heinous, like nuclear bombs or the KKK, I'd probably be very miffed, but most of the music that I listen to isn't used for commercials. You know, when I go to baseball games, they play the Ramones, and I actually like it. I think it's cool. Nobody in the stadium probably knows who the band is because it's all families and stuff, but it's cool to hear them in that context. Let's just be blatant about it. The Ramones are awesome. It's pop music and it should be enjoyed by the world anyway. There's no reason why it shouldn't be played on the radio every day.

Josh: And it's better than hearing "Who Let the Dogs Out?" at a baseball game.

Mario: Hearing the Clone Defects on a Mitsubishi car commercial was pretty surprising.

John: I just think, good for you. Get your perverted ideas out there.

Mario: Nick Drake on a Volkswagen commercial.

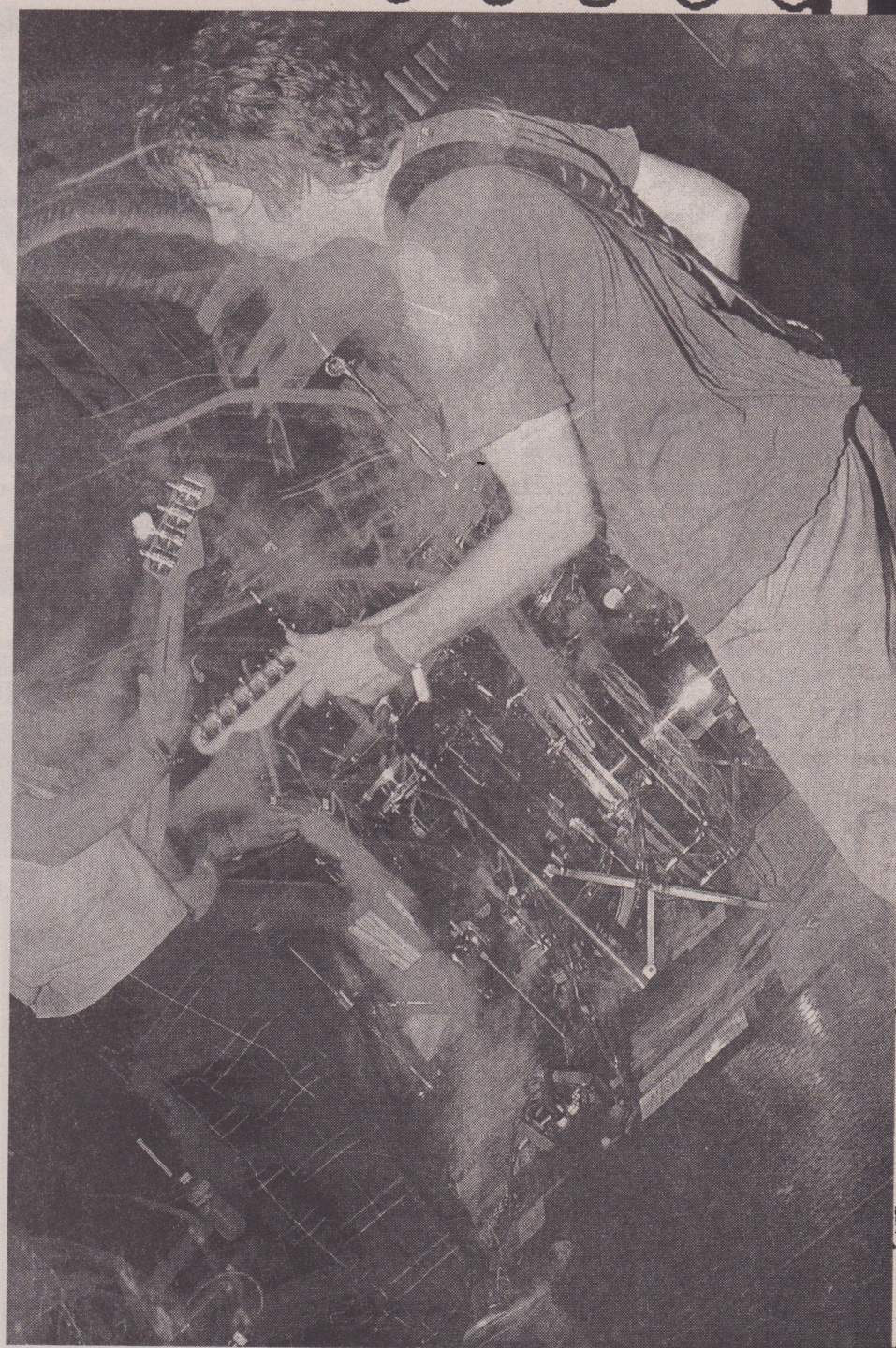
John: Yeah, Nick Drake probably sold more records in the one week after that commercial aired than he did in his whole career.

Josh: Mario, what's been the biggest adjustment you had to make going from Black Heart Procession to Hot Snakes and Rocket From the Crypt?

Mario: In Black Heart, it was very infrequent. I'd only play on maybe five songs in a whole set. Black Heart didn't really start out with the intention of being a band in the same way that most bands do.

John: It started a lot like this band.

Mario: Yeah, you know? Let's make a record. That was our first goal. I joined in on a couple of songs, and then before we knew it, we made a record, played some shows. Obviously, they've taken it further than that. I didn't really stay in that band for too long. Playing in Hot Snakes is definitely more my style of how I like to play drums.



John: Mario plays in a lot of great bands. He plays in this band called Earthless, a three-piece, mostly instrumental stoner psych rock band, and he plays guitar in this band called Mannequin Piss, a death punk kind of sound.

Mario: Early Black Flag or Motörhead...

John: But with a biker vibe. A BMX biker vibe.

Josh: What do you think Mario brings differently than the other drummer?

John: Turbulent rhythms, incessant hammering, relentless tom-tom attack, less cymbals, less sizzle, more of a chesty approach.

Gar: Colon-thundering low end..

Josh: Is it true that you got caught in a snowstorm in Minneapolis when you went to record the Selby Tigers?

John: Well, it seemed like it to me. I think they are pretty used to the arctic conditions from years of Viking training. Seeing as I spend most of my time nude or partially clothed, I was pretty numb.

Josh: Did they wear leisure suits in the studio when you were recording them?

John: A couple of them did.

Josh: So it wasn't just a stage show?

John: No, they dress like that all the time.

Josh: Did you really hire studio musicians to play a Superchunk album?

John: They weren't studio musicians, it was this band called Jughead's Revenge. We hired them to do all the tracking. Superchunk wrote the songs, but these other guys

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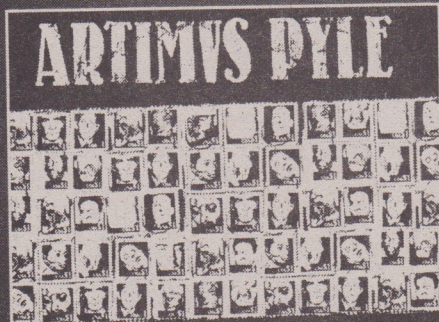


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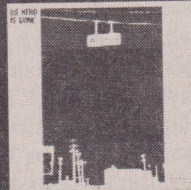
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played the music and Mac sang.

Josh: Jughead's Revenge doesn't sound anything like Superchunk, though.

John: I think that's why they wanted to do it, just to do something different, because at that point they had already made three records or something.

Josh: Why did Drag Racist Studios close down?

John: Fire.

Josh: Do you want to talk about that?

Mario: It's too painful.

John: It was like a lifetime of labor and building and passion up in smoke, but from the ashes, the phoenix will rise. There was this German tourist guy named Hans who was really into all the Swami stuff. He emailed me and said, "Hey, I'm coming out to San Diego and I want to start a studio like Drag Racist. Do you mind if I sit in and be a fly on the wall?" I foolishly said yes, and the guy ended up being the most annoying prick that we had ever met. He was there for the recording of the last four things we did there and he wouldn't leave at all.

It started off with me thinking I could get rid of him if I did this fake fire. Unfortunately, it backfired. After he ran out, it became too big for us to contain it.

Josh: Did anybody ever give you any grief about the name?

John: No, people liked the name. It's taken from a Truman's Water song. I like to drag race

and I like to dress in drag and Mario's a racist.

Josh: Did you really get your picture taken with GG Allin, like, fifteen years ago?

John: Yeah.

Josh: How did you go about doing that? Was there a meet-and-greet?

John: He was hanging out in his dressing room, and I cruised up and saw someone I recognized in there, which gave me the courage to go in there, too. When I went in there, he was a very personable character, down-to-earth, very willing to talk to people about his music and what he was doing, very self-promoting. He was so awesome, his... I don't want to say rhetoric, but all that rock and roll outlaw stuff and his transformation from this dude who lived in Connecticut or something into that vision that he had of himself. Whether you like him or not, his life was his art, as opposed to just music or something visual. He would probably be bummed to be thought of as that, like that's not dangerous enough. But people I know who knew him said that my encounter with him was really consistent with the way he was normally.

Josh: He didn't throw poop at you or anything?

John: That was just the "show" part of it. He didn't do that all the time, which is not to say that he didn't do all kinds of other crazy shit. He obviously didn't care what people thought of him, and if he did, he wanted people to think very lowly of him.

Josh: How did you get started doing Swami

Radio?

John: I started doing the show about three years ago at a different station, and I just kind of begged them for a job, basically, and when that station went off the air, I begged this other station for a job.

Josh: What kind of stuff do you play?

John: Lascivious funk music, self-indulgent dub and reggae, mind-melting psychedelia, inept garage bashing, raw-tarded punk rock, and everything in between—exotic music from places like Cambodia and Africa. Basically, everything I play is very raw in nature and neglected, or at least I feel it's neglected.

Josh: Why did you once say that Rocket would never play on a stage?

John: We were just playing parties and stuff at first.

Josh: How long did that last?

John: Three or four shows, four parties maybe. Yeah, that one went out the window pretty quick.

Josh: You once said, "I don't believe the good press, because that means that you have to believe the bad press." Do you think that helps you keep a level head after all this time?

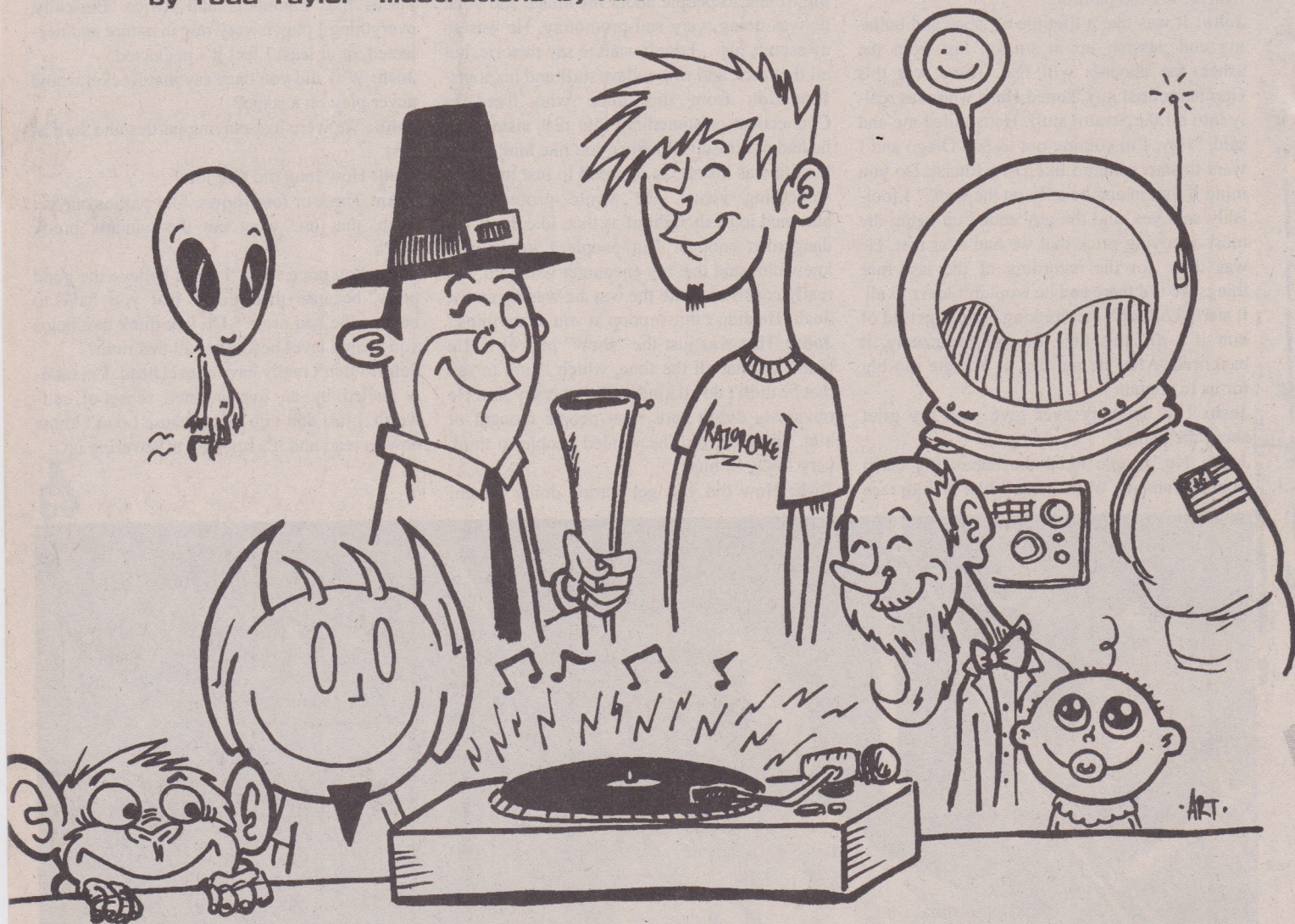
John: I don't really have a level head. I'm totally fueled by an over-inflated sense of self-worth. I just don't do that because I don't know how to read and it's my way of covering up.



VINYL AUDITIES

by Todd Taylor • Illustrations by Art Fuentes

A Look at
the History
and Ideas
That Keep
Vinyl Records
Spinning



"But I like the inconveniences."
—Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

A Needle Riding in a Groove

Vinyl's death knell has been ringing out ever since the advent of the reel to reel in the '50s. Then the 8 track was going to whoop it. Then cassettes. Now CDs. Vinyl records are definitely like punk rock in one respect: neither of them should still be around in any way, shape, or form. They should be long dead, decomposing quietly in the back of some archivist's cabinets, not rocking out in real time, halfway through the first decade of the new millennium. It just doesn't seem to matter that so many people have given up on both of them. Punk and vinyl just keep on perpetuating, popularity be damned. Remember this: there's a huge differ-

ence between outright extinction and a small, vital, supported interest.

From an outsider's point of view, vinyl records don't make a hell of a lot of sense. They're heavy and fragile. The more you play them, the worse they sound. Every time a needle passes over a groove, it changes the groove slightly. If you play a record repeatedly, it eventually wears out. There's no just hitting a button to skip tracks. They're not terribly convenient. They're old technology. You can't play them in the car. You have to do this thing called getting off your ass so you can flip it over and play the other side and the sides aren't terribly long. Vinyl records don't offer the option of putting thousands of songs into the palm of your hand via a powerful hard drive, selecting random—knowing that a laser isn't actually wearing away the digital representations of sounds—and as long as the numbers aren't corrupted, you can go jogging all year long, if you want to, without interruption, listening to every song in Hootie And The Blowfish's celebrated catalog every step of the way. Vinyl demands to be

interacted with. In this respect, a vinyl record is like a child: you have to hold its hand and be nice if you want it to stick around.

You've got to care for records or they'll deteriorate. Protect the sleeve from nicks by putting it in a little plastic sheath. Protect the vinyl from scratches by putting it in a little paper dust jacket. Keep dust and carpet fuzz off the record and the needle. No two ways about it: it's a lot of work to not fuck up vinyl. Then you've got to worry about floods, sunlight, fires, pets, dumb-ass friends with pizza fingers and poor beverage handling techniques. From albums warping to unintentional needle drags across the vinyl during momentary lapses of dexterity (Way to go, drunkie!), the list goes on. And, for all that care, the vinyl still doesn't last forever.

I'm not quite sure where my appreciation for vinyl came from, but I can tell you in two words why I love it: punk rock. For some reason that I'm not quite clear on, punk rock's firm handshake with vinyl hasn't lost its grip. There are other genres—such as dance music—that have also embraced vinyl. It makes more sense that a DJ doesn't want to just stand there, looking like a button-pushing robot while they could manipulate the sound of a record by slowing it down, fading it out, and doing things that DJs do. But, for punk rock, it doesn't make sense why vinyl's such a protected medium. I like that it doesn't make sense. I like that it's antiquated. I like that it's not "efficient." I like the fact that people who go out of their way to listen to music will be rewarded with full-sized cover art and little sayings etched in the inner rings of the record. I like being able to hear music that may very well have never been digitized—turned into solely zeros and ones—and played by human beings for human beings. There's something alluring about the words "vinyl-only release" and knowing that I own great vinyl records (like Hostage's badass *Collateral Damage* camouflage-wax compilation LP) that have no intention of ever being released on CD. It's a type of secret club, yet anyone with a record player and an affinity for punk is invited to join.

There's more than just a hint of ritual when turning on a turntable, putting on a record, and hearing the sound pulse from the speakers. It takes a little bit of care. A little bit of paying attention. A little bit of time each day. It takes a bit of scrounging to get all the components set up right. I also like seeing the record rotate and shimmer. I like that I can almost see how the sound is made. I like that it's real and comprehensible.

I'm not even sure if vinyl sounds better, as I've heard some pretty great-sounding CDs and more than a handful of crappy vinyl. But let's keep this in perspective. For fuck's sake, I love punk rock. It's not the most delicate form of music in the world. Here's some simple math for a basic music equation in my brain:

Mummies > Mariah Carey. Or, if that's a little too esoteric: monkeys > robots. I'm used to a little aural tumbling and knocking around. Audio poo-flinging isn't a negative in my book. As a matter of fact, I prefer and cherish it. What's a little hiss, pop, or crackle? I'm not listening to classical music and going, "Dude, that reverb on the flute solo is driving me bat-shit crazy!" (I'm not even sure if flutes can have reverb.) I grew up in an age when cassettes ruled supreme, where if I could hear a song while I was driving fifty-five with the windows rolled down, then it probably sounded okay by me.

CDs are like those pastel paintings that are bolted above beds in hotel rooms. Sure, there's millions of them all over the world, but just because they're everywhere doesn't mean they're the best, or even good. Great LPs are like short-run lithographs commemorating the world's best punk rock shows. You know that there's only a finite number out there, and yours was touched by human hands before you peeled it from the wrapper.

I've always been curious as to what makes vinyl records work. I mean, I understand that you plop them on a rotating platter, stick a needle in 'em, and music comes out of a speaker nearby, but beyond that, I knew close to dick. Wanting to change that, I did a little digging. Here's what I came up with.

Singing Cylinders Vs. Playful Platters The Epic Struggle of Cows Vs. Dickies

Somewhere along the five million years of development of Homo sapiens, we were furnished with mouths and ears. Inside the mouth is a throat. Inside the throat is a delicate membrane called a larynx. It vibrates every time someone speaks. These vibrations went airborne, and if someone was close, the vibrations struck on another delicate membrane: the eardrum. Fundamentally, that's how we hear. That's nature's telephone.

Although silent, the first major leap in sound technology came in 1857 when Leon Scott invented a device called the phonoautograph: a "signature of sound." It could transcribe sound onto a visible medium, but had no means to play it back after it was recorded. It made pictures of sound by focusing that sound through a horn onto an animal bladder—fashioned after how the human diaphragm worked—which, in turn, was attached to a stiff hog's bristle. The bristle moved back and forth in a continuous, wavy track on a revolving lamp-blackened glass plate. What it made looked kind of funky, and it didn't play worth a shit. Actually, it couldn't be played at all, but it was the first time that a human voice had been "frozen" in time. Scott had philanthropic ideas for the phonoautograph and believed that the

Definitions and Terms

Record: Initially, phonograph records were intended for office use, to make a record of business transactions. Over time, "phonograph record" got shortened to "record," the actual medium the audio was stored on.

Dubbing: When one recording is recorded over, so that a new recording replaces the old one entirely.

Flip side: The reverse of an A-side of a record. The lesser-known track. Strangely, looking through several unabridged dictionaries, there was no common use of this word prior to gramophone records.

Virgin vinyl: 100% new vinyl, as opposed to recycled vinyl used in normal albums.

EP: A 33 rpm 7" is known as an EP (extended play), with two or three songs per side. 45 rpm 7" EPs are also produced, using a narrower groove spacing.

LP: Originally 10", now most frequently a 12", an "LP" is a long-playing record, usually with between five and ten songs per side.

Wow and flutter: Unwanted variations in the tone level or frequency of the reproduced sound, usually because the record's not rotating at a constant, correct speed.

Spindle: The part that the record revolves around.

Plinth: The turntable's base.

Vinyl Storage Tips

- Keep records away from direct sunlight.
- Avoid moisture and extreme temperatures. Storing your records in basements is a bad idea.
- Store records vertically.
- Never leave a record in the original shrink wrap. It'll warp both the jacket and the record.
- I store all of my records in their dust jackets, slid in behind the record artwork, all together inside a plastic sleeve. The biggest advantage to this is that you'll prevent ring wear and the record won't chew through the album's cover.

visual recording of the vibrations of human speech could be of help to linguists. It didn't occur to Scott that those visual recordings could possibly be played back.

In 1877, the year most of you may remember as the first time root beer was first available on the open market, another exciting development occurred that might have escaped your attention. To commemorate the worldwide explosion of punk rock exactly one hundred years hence, Thomas Edison announced his invention of the first device for recording and playing sounds. He called it the "phonograph," quite literally a "sound writer."

In the original phonograph, a diaphragm—this time a thin disc of less than one-hundredth of an inch that vibrated when receiving sound waves—had a sharp-pointed needle attached to it under its surface. When the sound waves of Edison's voice struck the diaphragm, it vibrated the needle with it. The needle rose up and down and scratched a signal on the outside surface of a strip of a soft sheet of tin wrapped around a rotating metal cylinder, which was placed on a threaded shaft. These phonographs were extremely fragile.

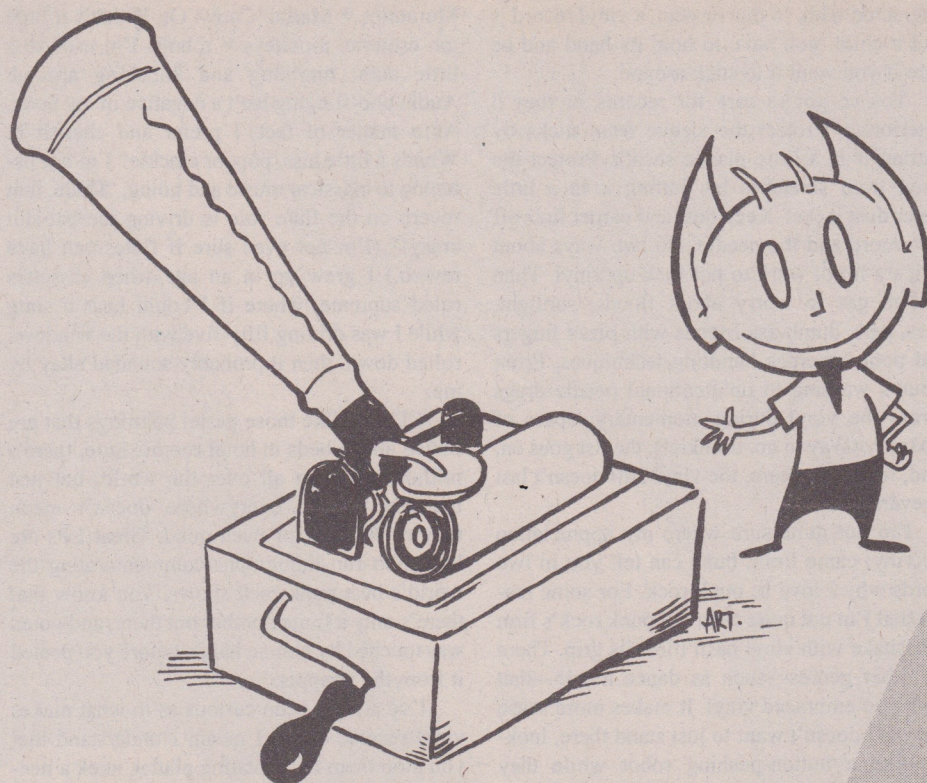
Think of a horizontal paper towel holder that is holding the cardboard middle of a roll of paper towels. The phonograph player would spin that roll while attached to the ends of the roll. A needle mounted onto the phonograph player would then vertically cut variable depths of grooves into the roll; low sounds were cut deeper into the roll and softer sounds were cut more shallow. This method of vertical cutting was also called the "hill and dale" cut because it resembled a miniature replica of mountains and valleys.

When Edison spoke into his device while rotating the cylinder, the needle "recorded" what was said onto the tin. To play back the sound, Edison set the recorder to the starting place and the same needle traversed over the groove scratched in the tin. A gear moved the needle in synchronization with the grooves of the recording. In a metallic, distant voice, the machine repeated what he'd just previously sung. On November 21, 1877, for the first time in history, a played-back recording of a human voice was heard as Edison sung "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Prior to that time, one had to make one's own music or attend a live performance to hear music.

These cylinders appeared in various sizes. In the late 1880s, a standard system was agreed upon between various manufacturers. These were about four inches long and 2¼ inches in diameter, about the size of the cardboard middle of a roll of toilet paper. They played about two minutes of music. They weren't terribly easy to store. They were too soft for making a permanent recording. They couldn't be easily mass-produced. They broke easily. The cylinders were sold in cardboard tubes with cardboard lids at each end. These containers prompted the nickname "canned music."

By 1884, Emil Berliner, a German who emigrated to the United States and settled in Washington, DC, quit his job working in a dry foods store, and became interested in audio technology. He worked for Bell Telephone in Boston for six years, then established himself as a private researcher. Although Berliner would go on to invent a new type of loom for the mechanized production of cloth, what most people remember him for is that he developed the technology of the usable disc record.

Through trial and error, Berliner embarked on developing a complex process to make playable discs. He first tried replicating Scott's experiments of photoengraving the surface of a glass disc which was plagued



Lil' Beez and Edison's phonograph.

with problems and quite possibly sounded amazing similar to when, in *Strange Brew*, Doug McKenzie tried to play a computer's floppy disc on a turntable. Brawwacckkk! Hiiissss! Cccrrreeeaacchthubthub! With a measured compound of stovemaker's zinc, beeswax, and gasoline, he began experimenting on making playable discs. On one side, he etched the zinc disc with a stylus. The other side he coated with varnish. The disc was placed in an acid bath. The acid etched super-fine lines, the actual recorded vibrations, into the grooves of the zinc. The disc could then be played on a turntable; the sound reproduced with a steel needle.

In 1887, Berliner was granted patent 372,786 for a "gramophone" using a non-wax disc engraved with a "lateral-cut" groove. Lateral-cut means that an actual record spins and sound is etched into it while it spins. The sharp object that makes the etching moves side to side, ever so slightly. The main difference between lateral-cut and vertical-cut—and one of the vast improvements over it—was that lateral-cut records have a constantly deep groove so that a flat disc of a unified width could be used. Sound vibrations were stored on the sides of the groove walls. For playback, a stylus would be fit down into the groove and, by placing the record on a turntable, the spinning groove itself would pull the stylus across the face of the disc. The stylus is just along for the ride and must comply to the record's grooves. As the stylus tracks the grooves, a mechanical vibration results. It contains both frequency and volume information for an audio signal.

Here's another way to understand it. A record spins at a constant rate so songs don't go from sounding like the Chipmunks to sounding like they were recorded by sad ghosts huffing ether. A needle at the end of an arm locks into a groove on the record. The groove has sound imbedded on its sides. The groove is a little bit wider than the needle. The needle bounces—ever so slightly—from side to side as it spins around. Sound comes out. Everybody happy.

Another benefit over cylinders is that these disc records could be stored and mass-produced, by a process of molding and stamping, much more easily. A bulk of discs, when placed in paper sleeves, could be stored upright, like books, in a small space. Another subtle improvement of discs over cylinders is that discs had a blank area in the center of them,

where the title, performer, and record company could be etched. No such markings could be etched on cylinders. They had to be accompanied by a slip of paper, which was often lost.

The next hurdle for Berliner was to develop a process for mass production of the discs, as the zinc disc and steel needle combination wore out quickly. Wax was too soft. Plaster of Paris proved too crumbly and fragile. Wood and bubble gum were out of the question. Berliner thought he had singled out the perfect candidate in a newly developed substance called celluloid, made from cellulose and camphor. Celluloid was easily shaped and molded, proving extremely versatile in its fields of application, providing a cheap and attractive replacement for ivory and bone. It was already being used in waterproof shirt collars, cuffs, and the false shirt fronts: dickies. Berliner began experimenting with it, but celluloid also proved to be flammable and easily decomposed. An extremely limited number of celluloid records were made and, eventually, sold. (FYI: Ping pong balls, one of the few products still made with celluloid, sizzle marvelously if set on fire.)

After obtaining a German patent for the gramophone in 1889 and visiting his birthplace of Hanover, Germany, Berliner was approached by a small toy company. They wanted to sell the small discs and hand-turned machines as novelties. In the early 1890s, the world's first samples of laterally cut discs were sold in Germany.

Early gramophones were plagued with playback problems. They'd oscillate at the speed at which they were played. An engineer and machinist, Eldridge R. Johnson, developed a system inspired by clocks by incorporating a spring-wound motor that released energy at a near-constant rate of speed. Gramophones were wound by hand using technology that was first developed, then rejected, for use in sewing machines. Berliner and Johnson had worked out the major kinks in the gramophone system and began selling the "talking machines" and discs that would play on them. These gramophone records were the first disc records to ever be offered to the public. They were one-sided, 5" discs.

The India Rubber Comb Company provided Berliner with his first substantial breakthrough. He found that when he warmed hard rubber, it was possible to stamp single-sided, 7" copies of records with the zinc negative. By mid-1888, Berliner began refining the rubber process, for both sound quality and to withstand mass production. The method he devised worked for several years and in 1893 Berliner applied for a U.S. patent for the hard rubber discs.

Within two years, 7" records were introduced for public consumption. They were a big hit. In 1895, Emil Berliner had made and sold 1,000 gramophones and 25,000 hard rubber discs. One of the largest sellers was George W. Johnson, a former Virginia plantation slave, and

who many consider the first prominent Black recording artist. The song was called "The Whistling Coon." The genre: "jolly negro." The record played at 55 rpm. It was a huge success. Johnson was paid twenty cents for his rendition and he helped set the standard for the music business to fuck over artists of all creeds and colors.

Berliner became dissatisfied with the records he was making with hard rubber, since an unacceptable number of the discs from his factories were defective. He tested, then was convinced of, a new compound. It was made from the secretions of the Lac beetle, an insect indigenous to South East Asia, mixed in with powdered slate. The compound was called shellac and its superiority over rubber was obvious. By the end of the year, all Berliner records were made with the newly utilized substance. Volcanic pumice—a light rock froth produced by the violent separation of gas from lava—was put in the grooves to keep the needle sharp as it played. Shellac records proved to be extremely versatile and were common all the way up to around 1950.

Thomas Edison was brilliant, but he was also stubborn and a bully. He abandoned neither his phonograph nor his cylinders. He still thought he had a chance since the amount of audio information on both cylinders and disc was roughly the same: two minutes. By 1896, his early prototype cylinders of tin were eventually replaced by wax compounds. A recipe was perfected in a brown, waxy substance that yielded a much more acceptable sound quality. The secret ingredient after experimenting with substances like whale wax? A shade less than half of the wax for the cylinders was made from stearin, the rendered fat of cud-chewing animals, like cows. Refusing to see that the phonograph ship was sinking, in 1902, Edison incorporated a method and technique of molding duplicate cylinders, which allowed for mass production.

Four years after the worldwide attention of Berliner's machines, a company called Wonder was shut down for bootlegging Berliner's records. They weren't that crafty in trying to cover their tracks. The geniuses simply copied a Berliner record and added a "1" to the disc number to claim it as their own. By 1898, Wonder was put out of business by the government.

Johnson and Berliner joined in a business partnership in 1901. The name of their company is called The Victor Talking Machine Company. Ten-inch records were introduced to the public. These discs could playback the human voice, but still could not record the high or low-end frequencies of strings or bass. In 1904, the first double-sided discs became available to the public. It doesn't sound like that big of a breakthrough, ("You mean there's another side to these things?"), but that little detail doubled the listening time on discs and put another

Trivia

Box Sets: The numbering of the sides of the discs in albums in box sets is explained by the fact they were designed to be played on changers. After the discs were stacked and one side of each disc played, the stack would be turned over together as a unit and replaced on the changer. The proper sequence of a four-disc set: side A would be 1 and side B would be 8, 2 and 7, 3 and 6, and 4 and 5. Some folks were confused by this, so record companies began offering both "numbered for automatic changers" and "standard numbering" box sets.

Did you know? Records have slightly higher fidelity at the outer edges, where the disc spins more rapidly than at the center.

Did you know? America is the only country that shrink wraps new records.

Razorcake fact. Number of 7"s reviewed in the last four years: 500, give or take. Number of "Hey, can you review the song that's attached to this link in this email in your magazine?": 0.

1918 was the first audio document of a gas shell bombardment.

Did you know? The first CD ever commercially released was Billy Joel's *52nd Street* in 1982.

Did you know? In 1934, a General of the Signal Corps, General George Squier, founded Muzak. He sold recorded music to homes in Cleveland.

Tips for Garage Sale Turntables

Garage sales are your number one bet for getting a cost-effective record player. Sure, you can go on Ebay or plunk down over \$100 on a so-so one at a chain store, but with some diligence, you can find one for \$20-\$30 on someone's lawn during the weekend. Ask if you can plug it in, even if there are no records to play. Don't be completely swayed at how cool the player looks. The two biggest hurdles are 1.) Seeing if the turntable still rotates and 2.) The needle and cartridge are still attached. To do this, very gently slide your finger under the end of the tone arm that would be placed on a record. If there's a needle, you're usually in business. Seventy percent of the time, there won't be. If both things check out, it's a relatively safe bet the record player will be okay. It may need a tune-up (if records continually skip or skate (drag for a little, then catch itself). But, if there isn't a needle and cartridge or if it doesn't rotate, it's a big crapshoot. Many belt-drives and needles just aren't made anymore. Some are, but they're mighty expensive.

The Wacky World of Lesser-Used Record Grooves

Inside out / Reverse groove: Record starts at the middle and plays to the outer edge. Drop Dead's *Armageddon* does this.

Parallel groove: Two or more distinct tracks are recorded on one side, interlaced. It depends when the needle is dropped as to which song will be played. This is a way to "hide" a song or have a "three-sided" LP. (Fucked Up's *Searching for Gold* EP and Monty Python's *Matching Tie and Handkerchief* LP both use this technology.) *Mad Magazine* released a flexi disc, *It's a Super Spectacular Day*, which had eight parallel grooves.) Times have to be equal for each groove.

Locked groove: Groove that intentionally repeats every turn of the record. It's usually at the end, like the car exhaust sound at the end of the Minutemen's *Double Nickels on the Dime*, or TSOL's *Dance with Me*, the B-side to the Damned's *Smash It Up* single, and the B-side to World Burns to Death's *Sucking the Missile Cock* LP. White Flag's *S Is for Space* has locked grooves that force the listener to lift the needle several times to hear all the songs on the record. The time for a locked groove is 1.8 seconds on a 33 1/3 and 1.33 seconds on a 45.

Vinyl Handling Tips

- When you remove a record from the sleeve, it creates friction. This friction results in static, which causes the record to attract dust. Be aware of that.
- Try not to touch the vinyl surface when handling your records. Use the label and the edges of the record.
- Never touch the grooves.

The most imaginative 16 rpm record player was fashioned into the 1956 Chrysler Imperial. This in-car turntable was factory installed underneath the air conditioning controls, below the dash, between the driver and passenger. It played stackable 7"s.

critical stake in the already stake-filled heart of phonograph cylinders.

Edison still didn't sway with the cylinders. In 1906, The Indestructible Record Company began mass marketing cylinders made of another formulation of celluloid, that Edison swore would not break if dropped and could be played thousands of times without wearing out. These cylinders, some argue, are still the most durable form of sound recording produced in the entire analog era prior to the introduction of digital audio. Two years later, Edison discovered that the induction of lead and asphalt vastly improved the listening volume of his cylinders and in 1912, he introduced to England an improved four-minute cylinder made from celluloid on a plaster of Paris core called the Blue Amberol. However, it would be seventeen more years, 1929 to be exact, when Edison would finally throw in the towel and concede that the gramophone was more utilitarian than his phonograph.

Between the years of 1906-1929 Victor spent \$50 million dollars in print advertising and \$17 million on catalogs for the Victrola, a phonograph player designed as a piece of furniture and all-enclosed in a cabinet. The consequence of this is that records, too, were sold heavily in furniture stores. The terms "turntable" and "record player" weren't quite in popular use. People were still just wowed by the fact that this thing actually carried other's voices and often used the term, "talking machine." This was also an era where normalization started coming into play, for both the records and the speeds at which they were played. Circa 1910, records rotating between 78 and 80 times in a minute were standard. By 1925, the revolutions became stabilized at 78 rpm with the introduction of electrically powered turntables. The 10" record usurped the 7" record as the audio medium of choice because it could hold about three minutes of music on each side.

Bell Telephone Laboratories developed a new electric recording process in 1925. Commerce and capitalism are often very far from the world of fair sportsmanship and an even playing field. In a secret agreement, the two largest record manufacturers, Columbia and Victor, colluded and began recording with a new electric process. They kept their knowledge of the new recording technology clandestine, away from public knowledge for a long period of time in order not to hurt sales of their existing acoustically recorded catalog.

Record companies also hit a dip in sales in 1930, when something that seemed as colossal as internet file sharing hit the world. For several years, widespread radio broadcast caused a decline in the manufacture of records. People could now hear music for free over the airwaves. It would take a couple of years for the recording industry to rebound and devise ways to make substantial sums off of both the radio and recorded discs. In 1931, RCA made its first

attempt by marketing 33 1/3 records. At first, their impact was minimal, barely noticed. They didn't sound that good.

Although there were bigger problems in store for the world at the dawn of the 1940s with the United States officially getting into World War II, one of the side affects of going to war against Japan was that the production of records came to a screeching halt. Shellac reserves were primarily in South East Asia. Supply lines were cut, shellac was suddenly scarce, and a replacement material was sought.

Due to the scarcity, a considerable amount of research and development was spent to discover a replacement material. It came in the form a plastic resin derivative of petroleum, polyvinyl chloride plastic, first developed by Waldo Lonsbury Semon. PVC, more commonly known as vinyl, is the same stuff that would be used for bean bags, credit cards, plastic wrap, uncomfortable underwear, residential plumbing, and higher quality band stickers. Someone also put two and two together and found out that records could be made of this vinyl stuff. It turned out that vinyl not only mimicked some of the best qualities of the shellac records, but that they could be etched with tighter grooves and provided a better playing surface. Gone was the hiss associated with 78s. Yet, it was found that vinyl was far from the perfect, everlasting material. It is very prone to acquiring a static charge and attracting dust. It's easily scratched.

Not long after WWII ended, in 1948, Columbia introduced the first 33 1/3 micro-groove LP with a 23-minute per side capacity. The narrower grooves were played by a stylus smaller than the ones used with 78s. The record was a good nineteen minutes per side longer than what had ever been available to the public. Columbia marketed them as "professional" speed. The same company also introduced the term "long-playing records," and trademarked the term "LP." A 33 rpm 7" was also released. It was called the EP (extended play), and contained two or three songs per side.

When it was first released in 1909, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* was collected in a specially designed package of four double-sided 78 rpm shellac discs. The packaging, which housed each record in its own paper sleeve and bound them all together like a big book, was called an "album," due to its resemblance to a photographic album. With the advent of the micro-groove LP, the same amount of music as an entire album of old style 78s could be fit on a single disc. It was possible to now listen through a whole movement of music on one side of a record. Later on, the *Nutcracker Suite* would be distinguished again by being the first piece of music to ever be recorded on vinyl. Since people were so used to calling the collection an album, although it was solely one disc, the name stuck.

RCA Victor had developed the 45 rpm format years earlier, but did not market it until

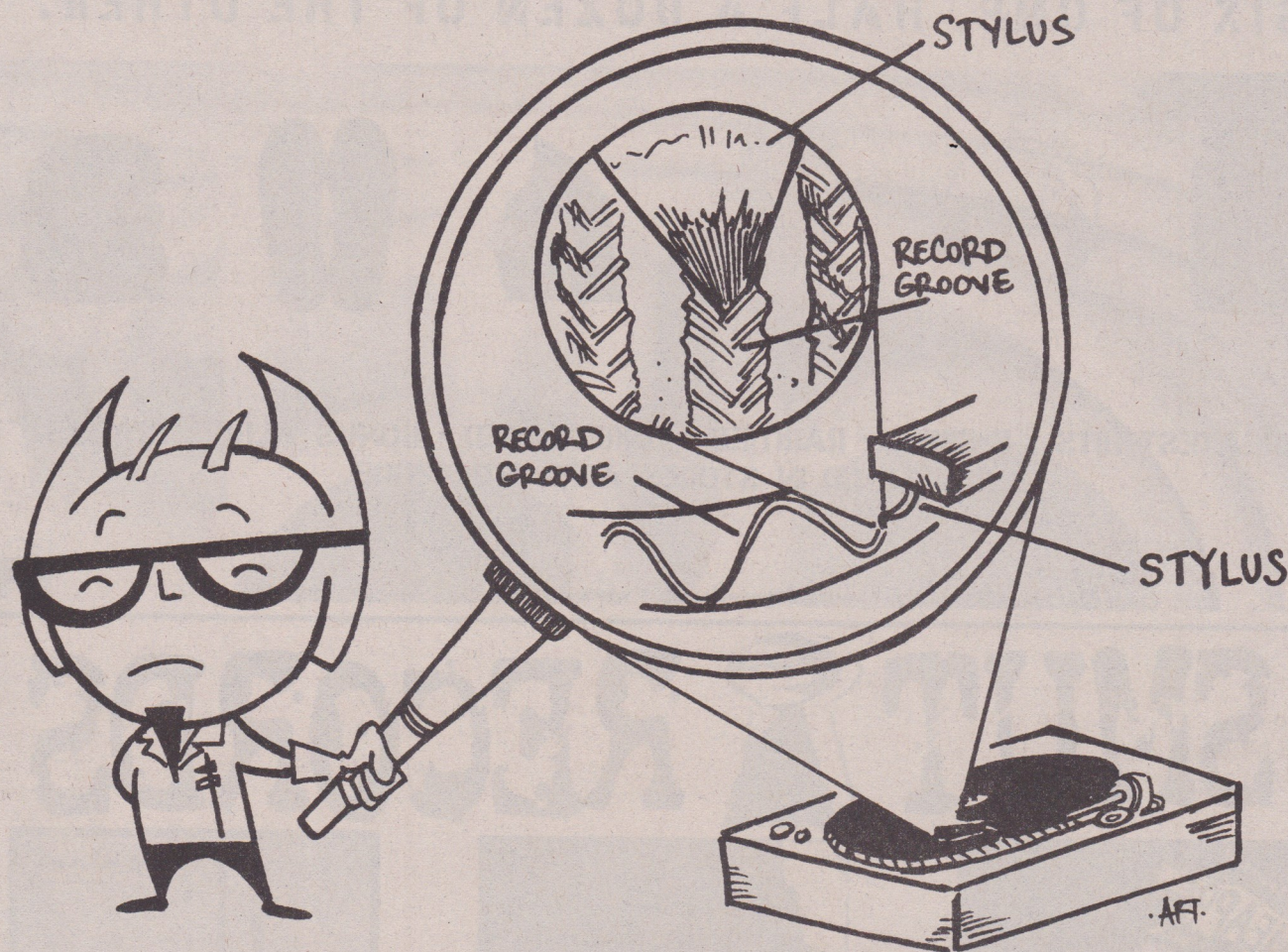
1949, in response to Columbia. Both companies were being dicks. RCA introduced their incompatible format as a competitive marketing maneuver. Not only were there now two different speeds (45 and 33 1/3), but the systems used different sized records (10" and 12" vs. 7"), and different-sized holes in the center. (RCA was the first company to put a big hole in the 7"s. There was no real reason for it.) Both systems of playing records were, undoubtedly, more lightweight, thinner, and higher-fidelity formats than shellac 78s.

There was one other record speed that was developed in the 50s. 16 2/3 rpm. The technology was developed by Peter Goldmark, the same man who invented 33 1/3. The sound quality was similar to that of a tele-

experience where the spatial location of the source of sound was partially reproduced.

The next twenty years, up through the 1970s, was left up to refinements in high fidelity. The only new format to emerge was the 12" single. Introduced in Britain in the late '70s, it carried the same material as regular singles with wider spacing between the grooves, allowing for higher sound quality than regular 7"s.

In 1983, the dusk appeared on vinyl's future. Although not immediately usurped, compact discs became mass produced and started gaining popularity. By 2005, vinyl would account for about only one percent of all record sales. It was a nice run; analog audio recording onto a disc was



Science Beez showing the itty-bitty parts of a record playing.

phone. These slower-rotated discs were designed for two completely different uses. Many were distributed by the U.S. government via its "Talking Books for the Blind" program. These types of discs became the genesis for books on tape. The most imaginative 16 rpm record player was fashioned into the 1956 Chrysler Imperial. This in-car turntable was factory installed underneath the air conditioning controls, below the dash, between the driver and passenger. It played stackable 7"s. Pardon me, but that's fucking cool.

Berliner's original idea and method of the lateral-cut disc proved to be so good and so advanced, that it took over seventy years to be vastly improved upon. In 1958, a new process was developed which converged the two technologies of lateral and vertical cutting. Stereo is born. The first stereo records are released in America. On stereo records, the inner wall of the groove carries the left-hand signal and the outer wall carries the right-hand one. The stylus moves up and down as well as left to right. These movements, it was discovered, provided a more natural listening

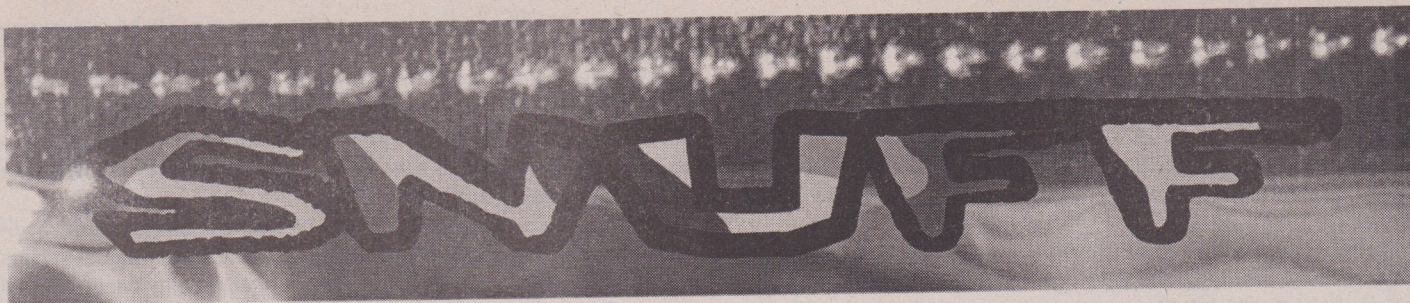
the main technology used for storing recorded sound in the 20th century.

So, that's a brief history of vinyl, but how do those things work? What actually happens when the needle hits the groove?

"Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road." —Stewart Brand

Vinyl records contain a single, continuous spiral groove in which a stylus rides. Records are most often played from the outside edge towards the middle. The record is rotated and has a groove carved into it that mirrors the original sound's waveform. Vinyl, literally, takes a picture of that sound, analogous to how cameras use film to capture light waves.

Sound is represented as undulations of the two sides of the grooves. Picture a big raft going down a narrow river. For a mono recording, the left bank is the left channel and the right bank is the right channel. The walls of the groove provide the force that accelerates the stylus. Your sty-



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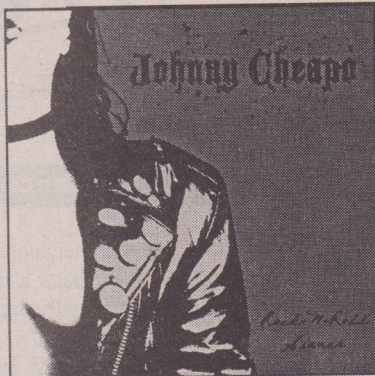


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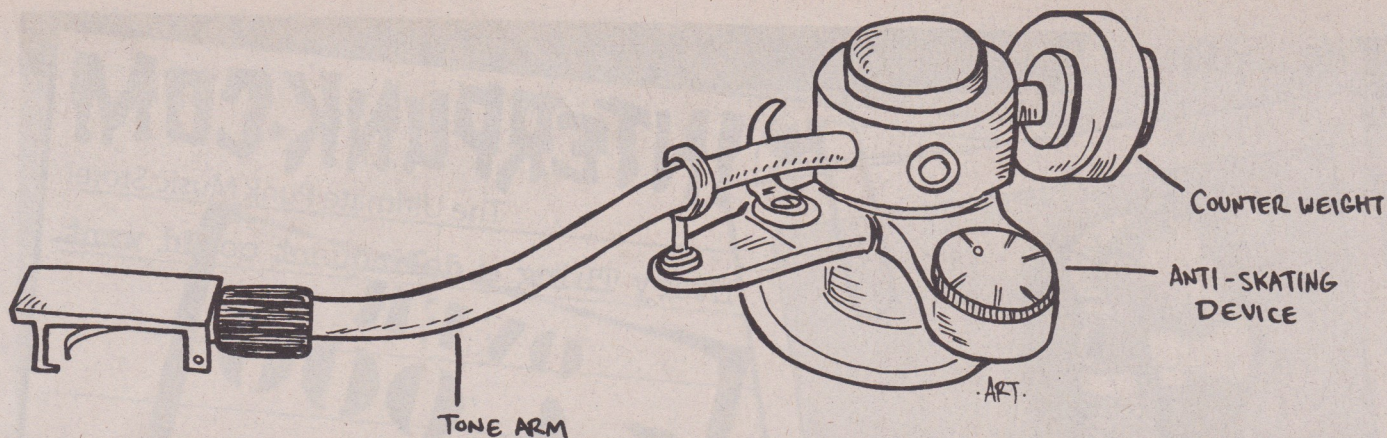
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The Tracking System of a Record Player

lus is the raft that is going down that river. The louder the sound and/or the heavier the bass, the wider the whole river. Your raft sweeps and glides side to side. The higher the pitch of the sound, the closer the wiggles get, and your stylus is like a raft shooting the rapids. Everything, from bass to treble, is happening at once, so the long, wide curves (bass and drums) have jagged wiggles (vocals, cymbals, guitars) superposed on top of them. It can be a tremendous amount of turmoil.

To get a firmer view on what a vinyl record does, it's helpful to contrast them with CDs. Even though CDs may contain some of the world's greatest music, I still can't help but feel a little removed from them since the music encoded in them is, technically, just a series of 1s and 0s. It's data on a machine which you retrieve by pushing a button or two. That said, they're economical for sharing with friends and archiving hard-to-find music.

Distilled to one simple concept, here's the difference between the two mediums: digital music re-creates sound. Analog music is sound.

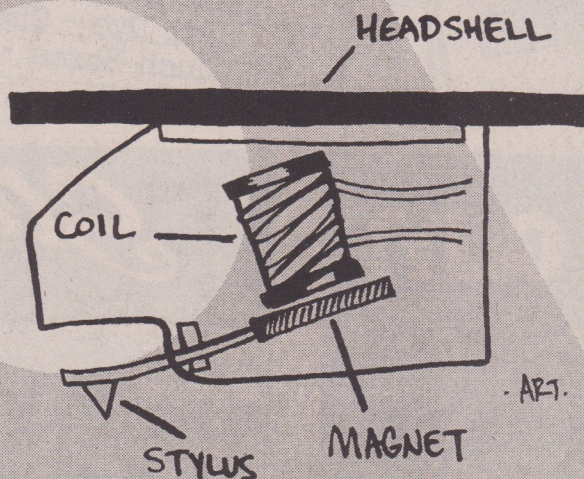
An analog device can handle an infinite number of values within its range. Analog is a continuous signal that constantly varies. The music on a vinyl record is continuous, rather than discrete. By contrast, a digital device can only manage a fixed number of possible values. An easy way to grasp the difference is by looking at a clock. If you're looking at one that has second, minute, and hour hands, all of the hands' movements are analog. A clock with only numbers representing time is digital. Digital represents its information in steps (exact second, minute, and hour), while analog is continuously changing along a more complex—yet naturally occurring—phenomenon. Analog differs by the fact that small fluctuations in the signal are meaningful.

The CD is a digital re-engineering of the vinyl record, reusing the basic activity of a disc with a spiral groove containing music tracks, yet utilizing digital codes and a non-contact infrared laser sensor instead of a needle. CDs also play from the inside out. The number of values that a sound can have on a CD is pretty staggering. It can take snapshots of an analog wave 44,100 times a second (called a 44.1 kHz sample rate), and measures each snapshot with a certain accuracy. Currently, industry standard CDs are 16-bit, which means that a particular sound has 65,536 different possible values. That's a lot of information, but it's technically far from infinite.

In fact, there's an argument that the sampling rate isn't high enough to capture subtle, almost subliminal differences. A vinyl record has a much

wider dynamic range than standard CDs, and although most of this range is beyond the limits of human hearing, it still has an effect on the sound of the recording. Audio recorded at extreme ranges provide harmonics for sounds that are within hearing range. Basically, it's not only the notes played on a guitar that are important, but the air around the guitar as it's played. There's also a group of thought which believes that sounds are a subjective perception in human beings, called psychoacoustics, where the sound you can't hear, the sounds that aren't registered and can't be sufficiently measured by scientific devices, add to analog records a "warmth" lacking in CDs. Maybe so.

I looked into the melding of the two worlds: vinyl and digital and came across the laser turntable. Although they minimize the wear on vinyl by only touching it with non-wearing laser, the cost is astronomical. If you want a device that plays both 7" and 12", it costs around \$14,300, plus a service contract that requires shipment to Japan, and it only works on black vinyl. That's way out of my league. My current rig, from player to amplifier to speakers, was less than two hundred dollars.



Sitting and Spinning: How a Record Player Works

A record is an incredible invention, but it can't spin and play itself. It needs something to move and tickle its grooves. That's where a record player comes in. A platter, on which the record is placed, is spun at a specified speed by a drive system. A pickup system in the form of a stylus and cartridge converts the audio on a record into an electrical signal, which is then sent to an amplifier. A tracking system in the form of a tonearm connects the cartridge to the turntable and also enables the pickup system to track the record grooves faithfully.

Let's look at the little bits and see how they all add up.

The stylus: the tip of the needle. It's the point of contact, usually a teeny tiny diamond. Contrary to the commercials, diamonds don't last forever. They wear out, too. It just takes a little longer than other gemstones. A stylus should ride in the grooves of a record with its weight evenly distributed on two points at the insides of the groove. It sounds pretty benign until you realize how much acceleration the stylus is subjected to. Some studies have shown that the needles spin in an upward of 100 g's. (Without a protective suit, the human body can typically withstand 5 g's of force before loss of consciousness.) Styli also travel far distances: about half a mile per record. After 1,500 plays, the

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stylus has traveled further than I do when I get in my truck in Los Angeles and drive for eleven hours to skate a really great, not-too-fancy community park in Ashland, Oregon. That's pretty damn far.

You know when your stylus is giving out when your records start sounding super shitty. (There's a big difference between sounding shitty-by-design and just plain ol' shitty.) At the first sign of noticeable wear, go buy a new stylus. Not only does it suck when your favorite records sound like poo, you run the risk of cutting them. A sharp edge forms on the stylus and gouges away at the friendly little sound-providing wiggles in the record grooves. Get

this: there is such a small amount of area resting on the groove—literally, not even the tip of needle, but the sides—that the total force the stylus places on the record is measured in *tons* per square inch. I found claims ranging between fourteen tons to forty tons. To put this in a little perspective, twenty tons per square inch is the amount of force exerted by an eight-foot shark's jaws and it takes very little effort for a shark to bite through bone and tissue. Imagine what it could do to your most rare Articles of Faith, Spontaneous Disgust, Big Boys, Smog Marines, or Zero Boys record. Carnage. Not a pretty thought.

To make this all seem a little more like science fiction, instead of a happy little record spinning around being tickled by a nice little needle, the temperature of the stylus rises to over 300 degrees Fahrenheit, which momentarily melts the vinyl as it passes through. Ever wonder where pops, hisses, and ticks come from? Often times, if there's dust on the stylus or the record, it'll be baked right onto the stylus and rip off chunks of the vinyl. If the scratch is deep enough, it could cause the needle to skip over a series of grooves, causing the player to skip over a segment, or worse, cause the needle to skip back, creating a locked groove. D'oh!

The greatest demands are placed on the smallest unit in the complete turntable system: the cartridge. The cartridge is the unit containing the stylus that actually converts sound into small electrical impulses. The "moving magnet system" is the most popular and widely used cartridge in use today. In modern stereos, the stylus means solely the tip, the connecting point of the record player onto the playing surface of the record. The stylus is attached to a doohickey called the pickup. The pickup is the stem that connects the stylus, on one end, and to a magnet

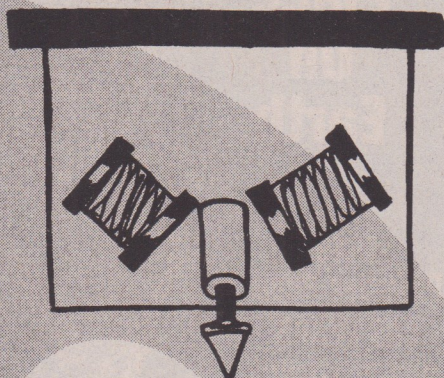
on the other end. Inside the pickup is a tiny, permanent magnet, which is placed between two fixed coils. This cartridge, affixed to the pivoted tonearm of the turntable, is the key factor in the reproduction of music from records because it makes the first and only contact with the record. Anything lost at that initial point will never be recovered.

The pickup is about the size of a fingernail on your pinkie finger. It not only detects and measures mechanical motions of hundreds of thousandths of an inch, it converts these motions into electric energy: signals as tiny as one-thousandths of a volt. As mentioned previously, the motion of the stylus is caused by the shape of the

grooves. The motion of the magnet is caused by the motion of the stylus via the pickup. This electrical energy, in the form of a tiny current inducted into the coils, represents the music that was used to determine the shape of the groove in the first place. It's really quite elegant. If you've ever played a record without turning on your speakers, you can hear the record faintly. This very quiet signal is then fed to an amplifier. The stylus vibrations are so small that they must be amplified thousands of times to produce sounds from the speakers.

The cartridge is attached to what's called the tracking system. The tracking system positions the stylus in the right spot and enables the stylus to track the record grooves. What positions the stylus is called the tonearm. Look at your arm. It kinda looks like that. It's a long unit that holds the headshell (which contains the little hook sticking out from it, so you can lift the tonearm with a single finger), cartridge, stylus, and a counterweight. This counterweight offsets the majority of the weight of the arm itself so not too much pressure is put on the stylus and less of a burden is imposed on the vinyl. Think of an almost perfectly balanced see saw. There is just enough weight on the stylus end of the arm to pick up the information in the ridges of a record, yet keep it from jumping up and down or skipping completely out of the groove.

On the far end of the tonearm is a seldom-visited dial (or slide) called the anti-skating device. If you placed a blank record on your turntable, the stylus would be automatically pulled towards the center of the record. This phenomenon is called skating. It's unwanted because it results in greater exertion of stylus pressure on the inner groove wall. An anti-skating device exerts a small outward force on the tonearm to compensate the inward thrust, so



COILS ARRANGED FOR STEREO REPRODUCTION

Jukebox Timeline

1890s: The first Automatic Phonograph Parlors were businesses that had a collection of cylinder phonographs with four listening tubes. They were brought about by the vogue of the slot machine. They did a flourishing business for just two years—one multi-listening phonograph earned over \$1,000 in its first six months of operation in San Francisco's Palais Royal Saloon—and then the craze vanished.

1927: Automatic Music Instrument Company of Grand Rapids introduced the all-electric coin-operated phonograph to replace coin-operated pianos. The idea didn't immediately take hold. Few were built prior to 1934.

1930s: The term "jukebox" came into use in the United States. "Jook" was slang for "dance." "Box" still meant "box." The first nickel jukeboxes kept the recorded music industry alive during the Great Depression.

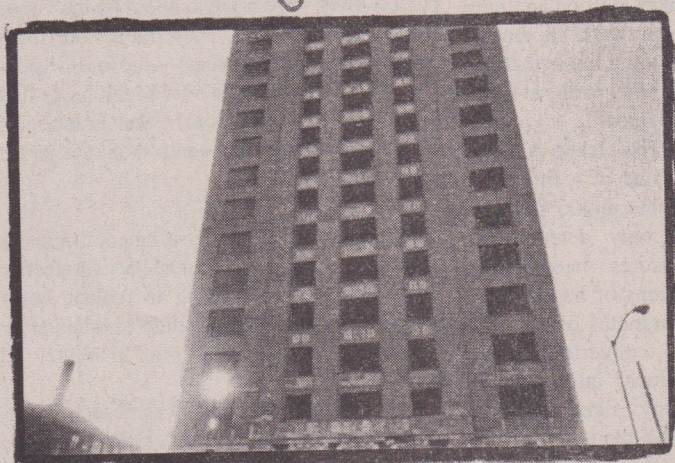
1934: Wurlitzer introduced multiple-selection jukeboxes. By 1939, 25,000 were installed across America. Bing Crosby was the #1 selection. (Bing Crosby, who by the time of his death in 1977, recorded 1,600 hit songs, made sixty-one movies, and sold 500 million records [over ten times the number that Elvis had sold by that time]).

1949: An Omaha radio man, Todd Storz, creates the Top 40 after realizing that customers in a bar played the same jukebox selections over and over again.

1951: Debut of the first jukebox that is able to play 7" 45 rpm records.

There is such a small amount of area resting on the groove—literally, not even the tip of needle, but the sides—that the total force the stylus places on the record is measured in *tons* per square inch. I found claims ranging between fourteen tons to forty tons.

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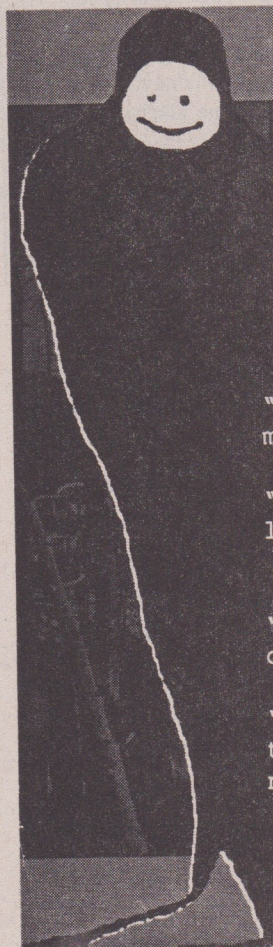
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when you put the stylus in a groove, there's an even weight between the inner and outer edges of the groove.

With all of these components dialed in and working together, your record will spin at the correct speed, won't get chewed up, won't skip, and it will provide you with the best possible sound your turntable is capable of. All you have to do is plug it into an amplifier and hook up some speakers. Then, you can dance around in your underwear and air guitar to your heart's content.

Fine-Lined Beauties: How Vinyl Records Are Made

Okay, so we know how the record came to be and how it plays. How are records currently made? I knew that the process for making a record would be involved, but initially didn't realize all the steps. A vinyl record has to be recorded, mastered, cut, fathered, mothered, stamped, poured, pressed, labeled, and sleeved. Damn, that's a lot of work, but with almost everything else in life, stuff that's easy to make is as equally easy to throw away. These processes are refined and fancied-up versions of both what Berliner and Edison had developed over a hundred years ago.

To manufacture a vinyl record, you start with a master tape. From about 1950 on, it became usual to have the performance first recorded onto audio tape, which could then be processed or edited. This master tape, technically, can be anything from a boom-box tape to a CD-R to a DAT (digital audio tape) to a reel-to-reel, but it must be compatible with what the vinyl pressing plant can deal with. (Call ahead.) The process of mastering is when the finished product is duplicated onto a media that is used to mass-produce more copies. Mastering also makes sure that the entire record sounds cohesive and balanced.

In the beginning, a record cutter would engrave the grooves into the master disc, often made of soft beeswax. Nowadays, using a cutting lathe, the music is transferred onto an aluminum disc covered with lacquer. The lathe operates with a heated sapphire or diamond-tipped stylus that etches a single, continuous groove into the soft lacquer. Inside the stylus are tiny coils. They're like miniature speakers that, instead of moving air, push the stylus to etch a groove. This stylus can oscillate at up to 16,000 times per second as it "cuts" the record. This precise operation converts electronic impulses into grooves on the record. If the cut is too deep, your playback stylus may not fit correctly in the groove; if it's too shallow, it may skip tracks. Each lacquer disc is single sided, so two must be made for a standard two-sided record. The catalog number, or matrix number, is added to the lead-out groove on the "dead wax" space at the edge of the disc, surrounding where the label is traditionally glued.

The lacquer disc—which some folks call an "acetate"—is then cleaned, washed, and bathed in chloride. It's then sprayed with a combination of silver, glucose (which is a form of sugar), and formaldehyde to make it electrically conductive. An acetate looks like a vinyl record, but it is actually a metal plate covered in a thin layer of acetone. (For you collectors out there, acetates are the rarest form of any record. Usually, they're one-sided. They can be played but wear out very quickly.) The acetate is then put in the technical equivalent of what usually happens when two mutually attracting bodies sit in a hot tub and drink a lot of beer. Well, sorta. The nickel in the bath slips into the silver on the record. The two bond together, creating an exact, fitting layer. When that metal layer is engorged enough, it is removed from the tub and the lacquer is thrown away. Ta da. When that 1/15,000" metal is separated from the master disc, you've now got what's called the "father" plate, which is a negative of the original. It has protruding ridges instead of grooves.

The mother plate is made from a re-oxidized father plate. It is a positive metal duplicate, identical to the finished record (yet can't be played). If you're going to make less than 10,000 copies of a record, you can skip making a stamper and use the father as one. (Here's the math: one father can make ten mothers. One mother can make ten stampers. One stamper can make 1,000 records.)

A stamper is a negative used to stamp out records. One is needed for each side. Stampers are used to press the grooves into preheated vinyl. If you've ever wondered how some records get streaked or marbled (and if you've never seen one of these gems, you're missing out, because even if the music on them sucks, they're neat to hang up for decoration) vinyl starts off in pellets that look a lot like rabbit poop. Most vinyl nowadays starts out clear and then color is added. Not all black-looking vinyl is the same. Traditionally, black vinyl was treated with carbon, which provided a stronger, slower-wearing surface. It was then discovered that if the carbon wasn't added and the vinyl compound was tweaked, a quieter playing surface could be achieved even though it is a slightly weaker record. Put a black record up to the light. If you can't see through it, it's carbon black. If you can, it's clear vinyl that is dyed black. The two sound virtually the same.

The stampers are mounted to the top and bottom of the record press and the heated vinyl is formed into a biscuit. The biscuit is then poured into the center of the press between the labels, the press closes, and 300 degree Fahrenheit stampers press down on the biscuit to form a record. That's why they call it a record "pressing." This all takes around twenty seconds. Then the records are lifted out of the press, trimmed of excess vinyl, laid flat to cool down, then sleeved.

The one hundred tons of pressure needed to press vinyl records is hard on the stampers, which will wear out and lose sound quality after about 1,000 records are pressed on them. A word to the wise to bands: have your stampers returned to you by the pressing plant with your record order. They usually won't hold them for very long and will scrap them for nickel. As a brief aside, some of the crappiest-sounding vinyl records were the result of a familiar trait that has constantly plagued the recording industry since its beginning in 1890s. Greed. For many years, U.S. manufacturers used poor quality vinyl and overpressed their masters to save money, often pressing three to four times the amount of records that a stamper could handle.

Well, that's about it. I just want to underscore a simple idea before splitting. Since what I do—as co-editor and co-publisher of *Razorcake*—is to help preserve and perpetuate punk rock culture to the best of my abilities, an element that lures me to vinyl records is that they're so acutely finite. There has never been a vinyl punk rock record that has sold a million copies. That appeals to the seeker in me. That's one thing that keeps compelling me to keep my ears close to the underground. We're dealing with limited windows of time where you can get a record at its original price, from record companies that are often little more than the band's self-made label, or a close friend who put some money down and runs the whole operation out of a closet. The record collector in me is also savvy to the fact that the most valued records ever made came in extremely limited press runs. In punk rock, a press run of 10,000 pieces of vinyl for a single record is gi-fucking-gantic. Most records have press runs of less than a thousand. Usually, when they're gone, they're gone (either literally or into the financial stratosphere of Ebay) and it's not like you can buy a blank piece of vinyl for less than fifty cents (like you can with a CD), and make an exact vinyl duplicate copy. With vinyl, you're literally holding a slice of time that can't easily be replicated by the end user. True, the sounds on the vinyl can be replicated—if you hook a turntable up to a computer's sound card—but making only one vinyl duplicate of a record once it's out of print? It'd cost you over five hundred bucks and you still wouldn't have the cover art. But why go through all of that?

Go find your new favorite band, one that's still around. It may cost you as little as four bucks and the rewards, well the rewards, to me, are as obvious as and plain to see as a great record spinning on a turntable.

Special thanks go out to Jason Willis of the Knockout Pills and Paul Brekus of Aardvark Record Mastering for lending their expertise and considerable knowledge to this article.



Giant Haystacks

In the pages of this very interview, the members of Giant Haystacks will refer to themselves as sort of a Minutemen cover band, but don't let their modesty fool you. At first listen, their music does bear a striking resemblance to San Pedro, California's finest. It's frenetic and disjointed. There's very few choruses. It's dance music for people who can't dance and people who don't like to dance. If you dig a little deeper, you'll hear echoes of the haunting cold war paranoia of Really Red and the skewed oddball pop of the Embarrassment. But to just compare them to other bands would be selling them short. In the end, it's three very intelligent people playing music for no other reason than to just do it, and I guess that's the strongest Minutemen comparison of all.

Interview by Josh
Photos by Kat Jetson

Josh: So how often do people go to your website mistakenly thinking it's for the wrestler Haystacks Calhoun?

Allan: I don't really know. We know how many people go there, but we don't know why they go there. Actually, we're not named after Haystacks Calhoun. We're named after another wrestler called Giant Haystacks.

Josh: I thought they were the same person.

Allan: No, Haystacks Calhoun was an American wrestler and Giant Haystacks was an English wrestler. When he wrestled in the US, he went under the name Loch Ness. People do pick up on the wrestling reference, but there's only about thirty people a year who click on our website, so it's not a big deal.

Josh: What do you do for a living?

Nate: I'm a copy editor for press releases. It's real exciting.

Daniel: I'm a semi-official student.

Josh: Explain "semi-official."

Allan: He doesn't enroll. He just shows up for classes.

Daniel: There's something called concurrent enrollment where I take advantage of

a loophole in the University of California system.

Allan: I work at a warehouse packing boxes of records.

Josh: Because when I was researching you guys, I found another Allan McNaughton who's apparently big shit in the computer programming world.

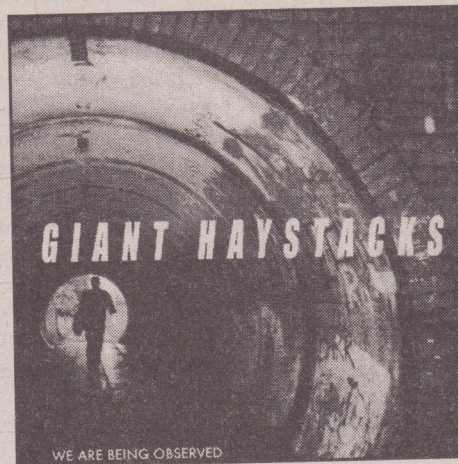
Allan: He actually gets a lot of my frequent flyer miles. I never get any of his. There's also another Allan McNaughton that writes children's stories, and I get all his royalties. I spend 'em on porn because I feel like that's what he would do, too.

Josh: How old were you when you moved here from Scotland?

Allan: Twenty-five.

Josh: Okay, so you were already involved in punk rock by that point. What's that like in Scotland? There aren't a whole lot of Scottish bands that I can think of.

Allan: When I got into punk rock properly, it was through skateboarding and BMX, so I actually got into a lot of American bands before I got into British bands. Shortly after that, I realized that there was actually a scene going on in the city closest to me, which was Glasgow. The scene in Glasgow was a pretty good DIY scene of bands that were definitely punk but more influenced by bands like the Ex and the Minutemen, so I was going to see bands like Dawson and the Stretchheads. Those are really two of the biggest influences on me, those local bands from when I was young. I don't live there anymore, but I still get the feeling that there's a pretty strong scene.



Josh: How old were you when you got into BMX?

Allan: Twelve. Actually, I was probably more like thirteen. It was the year that everyone did it...

Nate: The year that BMX broke.

Allan: It was the Cabbage Patch Kids of that year, everyone got a BMX in 1983 so I did too. The next year everyone got into something else but I stuck with BMX with a bunch of my friends. Quite a few of the people who I've known through BMX are still some of my closest friends, and they're still involved with it.

Josh: Why'd you stick with it?

Nate: Because he's hardcore.

Allan: I just felt really connected to it. Who knows? Maybe if my closest friends had gotten out of it, I might have, too. We all kind of stuck with it together, so it was like a community.

Josh: What's your earliest memory of wanting to play music?

Nate: I was in the junior high band and I was gonna play trumpet. Two of my friends were gonna play trumpet with me, but they didn't show up to class the first day. They went to wood shop instead, like all the other cool kids. There was one guy I knew playing drums, so I started playing drums because I knew him and I just kept playing. Got a drum set that same year and have been annoying my parents ever since then.

Allan: I've got a vague memory of trying to get my cousins and my brother to play music when we were little kids. We had this old acoustic guitar and I would strum that and I wanted someone else to sing and my brother to bash a bucket or whatever. I don't think I ever persuaded them to actually do it. Later on, I took that acoustic guitar to a lesson that they were having at the church hall. They were playing acoustic gospel and I went for one lesson but it was really lame and boring.

Josh: At church? No way!

Allan: I went home and put the acoustic guitar on top of my wardrobe. I think it's still there.

Daniel: I think it was in eighth grade when a friend and I performed Simon and

Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence" but we didn't have a guitar. It was for a talent show or something, and it sounded like shit. We had to get the music teacher to play piano or something, so after that, we decided that we had to learn guitar.

Allan: Daniel is actually the only musician in the band.

Nate: If I had stuck to trumpet, I'd be a musician. I'd also have a lot less to carry around.

Allan: A life lesson for you.

Josh: What made you say that you wanted to start a three-piece band? Like, why no more than three?

Allan: It's all you need. The more people you add, the more...

Josh: Diluted?

Allan: It doesn't dilute it, but it's more hassle. Three people are easy to manage. It's easy to get people together. You don't have to have a shitload of equipment, you can just bring the bare minimum of stuff. It's just our minimal approach; do as much as you can with the bare necessities. A lead singer is kind of extraneous, and so is having a lead guitar and a rhythm guitar. I like plenty of bands that are four-pieces and twelve-pieces or whatever, but for us, I like keeping it simple and straightforward.

Josh: If you could take any book that you had to read in high school and replace it with any book you want, what would you do?

Allan: I would replace almost all the books by English authors that we were forced to read and replace them with Scottish authors like James Kelman, Irvine Welsh, Tom Leonard, people like that. When I was growing up, we were brought up to believe that

oneselves to speak like the newsreaders on the BBC did. It gives kids in Scotland a sense of inferiority even at a young age. I think maybe if they got to read books that reflected their lives and reflected the way people talked around them and reflected the lives that people led, they might feel as if they had something to offer culturally.

Josh: Would you consider yourselves paranoid or maybe pessimistic?

Allan: As people, I think we're pretty light-hearted in general. We're not like, "Oh man, the system is bringing us down," so I don't know where that comes from in the music. Although I do think the world is going to hell.

Nate: I think when you guys sit down and write lyrics, you write about what's fucked up and that comes through.

Allan: Seriously, I'm pessimistic about the state of the world. I go through phases of thinking, "Oh, things have changed," but I don't think they have, you know what I mean? No one who's going to be reading *Razorcake* needs me to tell them what's wrong. You just have to take a look around,

Nate: Playing music. Making other people happy by playing music in front of them.

Allan: There are things that give me hope. There are people who are doing good, positive things to make changes everywhere they can, so you realize that humanity's not all bad. We're not all just insects that should be wiped out, but most of us are.

Josh: Explain the crucial gap.

Allan: That's kind of self-help therapy-speak that you could probably get in a paperback book at the supermarket. I guess that helps us on; you know, make the most of your situation and quit sitting around moping about it. That's more of the message of the band than anything else like the bleakness or pessimism or paranoia. Despite the fact that the world is fucked up, there's still room to do your own thing and do what you want and carve out your own little niches. We're doing this band and no one gave us permission, we just did it.

Nate: That's very quotable, Allan.

Allan: Thank you.

Josh: Who is "A Different Fish" about?

Daniel: Tell us what you guessed first.



Allan: As people, I think we're pretty light-hearted in general. We're not like, "Oh man, the system is bringing us down," so I don't know where that comes from in the music. Although I do think the world is going to hell.

the way we talked and the way we wrote was wrong, and that we had to train our-

Open a newspaper and it's all bad news.

Josh: Well, then what gives you guys hope?

Josh: I didn't make a guess.

Daniel: Fair enough. Well, actually there's

no reason for you to be able to guess just by the lyrics.

Allan: That line in the song, "If you want to be a different fish, you have to jump out of the school," that's actually a quote from Captain Beefheart when he was being interviewed on *The David Letterman Show*. I had this videotape with a clip of that, and I felt like people were laughing at him and not really appreciating the fact that he's a genius. They just thought he was eccentric and silly and stupid and laughable. They couldn't see things the way he sees them, so they just thought it was funny. I'm not saying I can see things the way he sees them...

Josh: But you can kind of appreciate it.

Daniel: What was that song called before?

Nate: "I'm Going to Wash My Socks in the Shower."

Daniel: Yeah, we had some really silly lyrics for that song before the "different fish" idea came in.

Allan: We do that, where we fill in any

Allan: That's hopeful.

Josh: How long have you worked for *Maximum Rocknroll*?

Allan: Consistently since 1995, when I moved to America. I had done some other stuff on and off, like guest columns, but in 1995 I started doing reviews and layouts and stuff like that, and I was president of the board of directors for a while, so therefore I was president of punk. My theory was that since *Maximum Rocknroll* controls punk, the president of the board of directors of *Maximum Rocknroll* would be the de facto president of punk. Not a lot of people knew that at the time, I didn't receive the deference that I expected, so I quit.

Josh: I'm actually the treasurer of Razorcake.

Allan: What does that entail?

Josh: I, uh, take the money envelope to the post office and pay for postage with it.

Allan: So you're the mailman of punk.

Josh: What's the weirdest comparison

Allan: They're all Minutemen covers in a way. Someone else said we sound like the Violent Femmes. Maybe that means we're hard to classify, and that's good. Whatever their experience is, they relate it to that. If somebody's never heard Wire or the Minutemen or Gang of Four or Mission of Burma or all these other bands that people trot out, then maybe the Violent Femmes is the closest thing to compare it to.

Josh: At what point in your life were you more scared than you had ever been before?

Nate: I got beat up about a year ago, and after that, when I realized how bad things were, I got scared. I got jumped by three guys, and afterwards I was sitting in the hospital thinking, "Holy shit, I could have died." I was scared afterwards, but not during.

Allan: I remember feeling a general fear and anxiety for most of the '80s.

Daniel: "What am I gonna wear?"

Allan: "Is this desk going to protect me

We're not all just insects that should be wiped out, but most of us are.

stream-of-consciousness words until we come up with actual lyrics just so we have something to sing when we practice it.

Josh: Who's John Ray Leonard and why'd you write a song about him?

Daniel: He's this guy who devotes his life to defending the rights of people who have been hospitalized...

Allan: Marginalized.

Daniel: ...Against their will, or threatened with hospitalization against their will for supposed mental deficiencies. That's his cause. At the end of that song ["John Ray Leonard"], there's a thing about him leading a movement in this town. That movement is the people who feel they have been unjustly restrained on the basis of their behavior. I read about it in the *Street Spirit*.

Allan: It's a homeless newspaper. Homeless people sell it to make a little bit of money.

Daniel: It's kind of a local story. That's partly why I was interested in it.

you've ever heard of your band?

Allan: Somebody said we sounded like the Descendents. I think it was because he was a young guy and he didn't have a lot of reference points.

Daniel: Another guy came up to me and said he liked the Minutemen song we played, but we didn't play anything by the Minutemen.

when the bomb goes off?"

Daniel: I went through a period where a friend of mine was suicidal. It's one thing when you're suicidal. You don't have to be afraid because it's in your hands. When someone you love is suicidal, that's got to be the scariest thing.

Josh: Why do you think it's not as simple as the police versus the kids?





Allan: There's a tendency to paint really complex problems as black and white, right or wrong, left and right, whatever, and it's never that simple. It's never like all the kids are cool and all the pigs are pigs. The pig who you want to throw a rock at or blow up has a wife and kids at home. To be certain, I'm not an apologist for cops. They choose their job and they make that decision, but it's still worth thinking about that they're human beings.

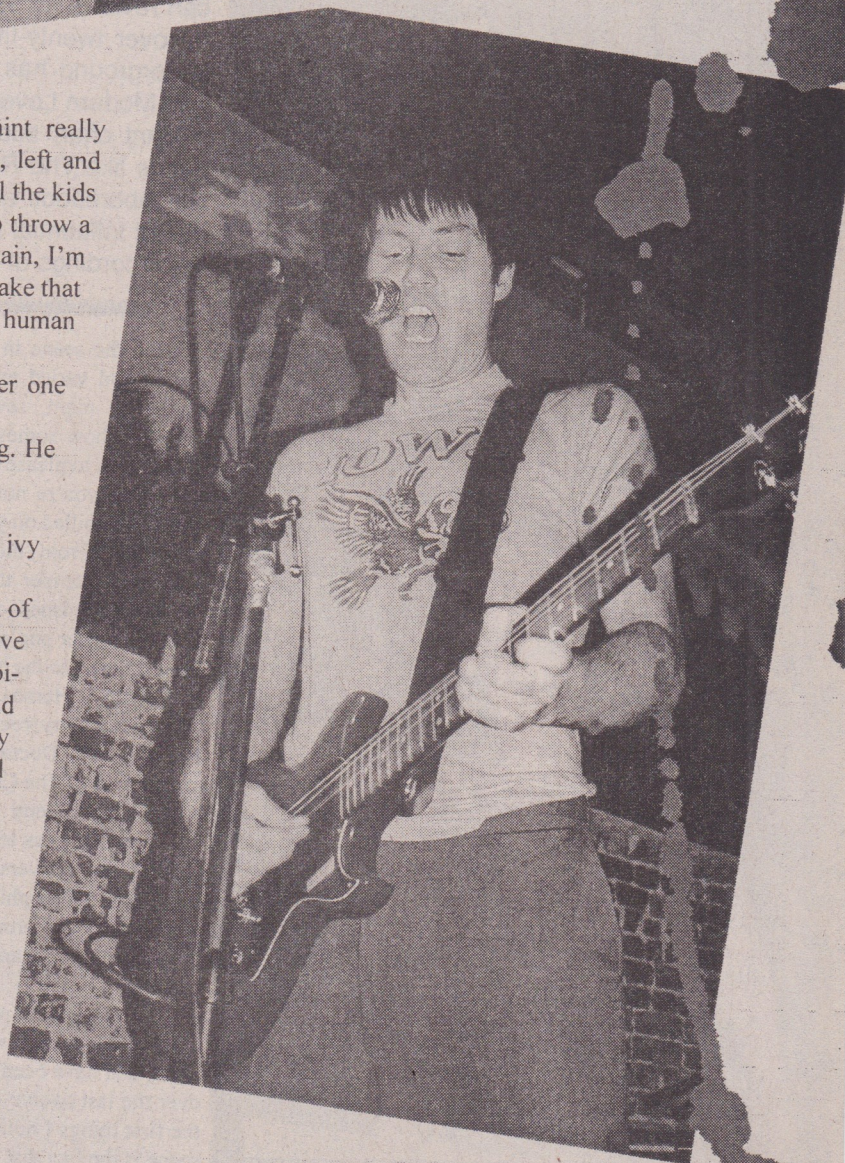
Daniel: We actually dedicated that song to a police officer one time.

Allan: Yeah, a cop came to see us and we played that song. He came because he thought we were that pro-cop band.

Daniel: We got arrested after that.

Josh: Nate, can you tell me the story of how you got poison ivy on your dick?

Nate: We were up in Bodega Bay at this house with a bunch of friends, and we were looking around and the house right above us on the hill had a hot tub. It was perfect. No sign of inhabitation all day. We went up there at night, lifted the cover, and it was cold, so we were like, "Oh well. Fuck it." One of my friend's was like, "No! We'll turn it on and heat it up. We'll come back in an hour. It'll be great!" So we started walking around looking for the circuit breaker when, all of a sudden, all the lights in the fuckin' house come on. We started running off the deck and this guy comes out with a shotgun: "Don't move or I'll shoot you!" We dive off this deck that's fifteen feet up and go sliding down this hill and had to crawl through this ditch to get home. I guess I got it on my hand and then when I went to piss, I got it on my dick. It was awful, like a grapefruit swinging from the end of the shaft. Totally awful. Don't touch your dick after you've been in the woods.

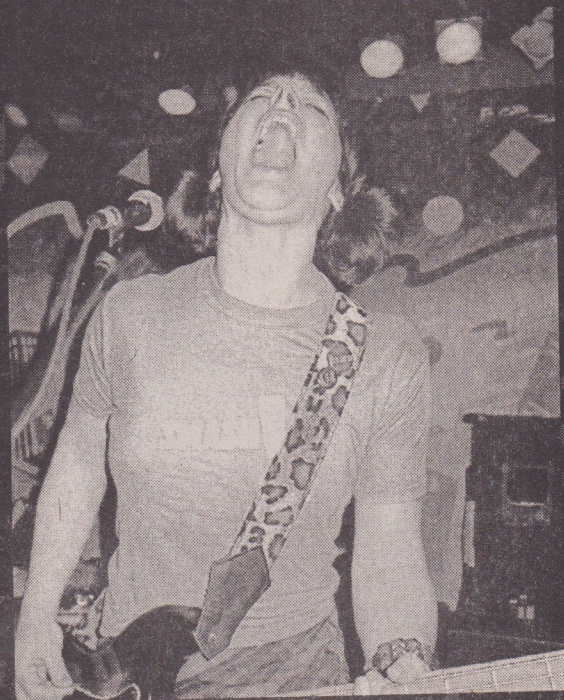


www.gianthaystacks.com

We also encourage people to write: Giant Haystacks, PO Box 22971, Oakland, CA 94609

Boston DIY Rock

By Brian Mosher
Photos by E. Law



Michelle
The Dents / The Marvels

I'm a relative newcomer to hanging around the Boston music scene. Sort of a late bloomer, I guess. I've always been interested in music, especially hooky rock music with brains. But it's only in the last couple of years that I've become aware of the fact that there is so much good music being made by local musicians. I think it's partly because there is so little good music on the radio or MTV. Back in the 1980s when I was starting to really build my record collection (and my sense of what I do and don't like), you could hear The Ramones and The Pretenders and The Jam and The Clash on the radio. Back then I was working in an independently owned record store and attending arena shows more than local clubs, because acts like R.E.M., Hoodoo Gurus and The Cult were playing arenas. But today, mainstream radio has largely abandoned rock music in favor of flavor of the month Barbie impersonators and O-Town boy bands, meaning that real rock music, the kind that draws you in and makes you feel like part of a secret society, the kind that makes your pelvis swing, the kind that makes you want to jump up and down uncontrollably, has gone underground, where it was born in the first place and where it has always thrived. So if I want to hear new bands performing the kind of authentic music that moves me I have to go the clubs of Boston and Cambridge and Quincy. My pursuit of this authentic rock music has led me to a gig writing CD and concert reviews for *The Noise*, a local zine that's been covering the scene for over twenty-five years, a period of time during which the Boston underground has produced some truly impressive bands. Bands like The Modern Lovers, Del Fuegos and 'Til Tuesday, all of whom had significant chart success and a lasting influence on modern rock, and bands like The Real Kids, The Dogmatix, The Lyres, The Pixies, The Neighborhoods and The Blackjacks, just to name a few, who all produced influential records, if not hits—records that continue to echo in the recordings of garage bands and young punks around the world.

And the scene in Boston today is as vibrant and varied as it's ever been. On any given night, seven nights a week, there's a show somewhere in the greater Boston area to please pretty much anyone, as long as you're not opposed to having some beer spilled on your shoe—or spit in your face. From the pure pop of The Rudds or Scamper to the street punk of Far From Finished or The Street Dogs; from the power pop of Brett Rosenberg or The Buckners to the beer-soaked '77 punk of Nobody's Heroes or Darkbuster; and from the country rock of Bees' Knees or The Country Doctors to the anthemic garage rock of The Charms—you can find it all in the general neighborhood of the little city that likes to think of itself as the Hub of the Universe. And Boston is a small city, geographically, at least, so it's pretty easy to get around town, and maybe even catch more than one show in a single evening.

I'm not exactly a scene insider, but I have gotten to know a few local musicians, and have been to quite a few shows over the last twelve months or so. One of the first things I noticed about the current scene is the fact that so many of the musicians are in multiple bands. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is one of

my personal favorites, The Dents. Led by a powerful pair of female singers, The Dents play a style of punk/pop that's hard to categorize but easy to enjoy. The two leading ladies, who split the vocal and song writing duties, are Michelle Paulhus on bass and Jen D'Angora on rhythm guitar. In addition to The Dents, Michelle also plays bass in the all-female cover band The Other Girls and the punk band The Marvels. Jen, meanwhile, only recently left The Other Girls, and plays guitar and sings in The Downbeat 5 with lead guitarist and ex-husband JJ Rassler, who's been playing in Boston bands for over three decades, most notably with the seminal DMZ. The Dents' lead guitarist, Craig Adams, also plays in the metal band Bipolarcoaster, and in the AC/DC cover band Beefy DC (you've got to see it to believe it, but the lead singer weighs more than my entire family, and sounds *exactly* like Bon Scott). While The Dents are an extreme example of this multiple band thing, there are few bands in the city that don't have at least one member with another project.

According to some of the veterans on the scene, this is a relatively new phenomenon. Drummer extraordinaire Jimmy Birmingham (most recently of a reformed

version of The Real Kids and Mach V) says, "Growing up it was one band only. It amazes me now that one person can have three different bands and play well with all of them." And he knows what he's talking about. He is good friends with Michelle Paulhus and was invited to join The Dents when their drummer quit, but being a full-time teacher, he didn't feel like he had the time to devote to a full-time band.

Mach Bell (Thundertrain, Joe Perry Project and currently with Mach V) has this to say: "Y'know, I can't really recall this multiple band thing happening at all 'til around the mid-'80s. Even then it would only be like a very hot drummer or maybe a two-man rhythm section splitting time between a couple of bands. In the '60s and '70s the band line-ups stayed pretty sacred. Bands like Thundertrain who often played outside the city usually had to be ready to fill an entire night with several sets of music. I think we had more

interests, the only option is to have multiple musical projects.

Obviously, it can be a challenge to balance the schedules of more than one band, in addition to having a job. Michelle Paulhus: "there have been times when the Dents' and Marvels' schedules conflicting have resulted in turning down shows. Most recently The Dents had to turn down a Saturday night gig at CBGBs due to The Marvels having an important show on the same night." But, to Michelle at least, it's worth the occasional schedule conflicts to have the opportunity to play in two vital, active bands: "... because I love both the Dents and the Marvels so much, I feel like it is worth it." Having seen both bands, I'd have to agree. They're both dynamic, exciting bands to watch, with very different sounds. The Marvels hit you like a Mack truck, and then spit in your face to make sure you got the message. The Dents come at you more subtly, with harmonies and melodies laying on top of the

There's a show somewhere in the greater Boston area to please pretty much anyone, as long as you're not opposed to having some beer spilled on your shoe-or spit in your face.

opportunities to cram a lot more variety into those lengthy song lists." By contrast, shows nowadays consist of three or four bands, each playing thirty to forty-five minutes. Do the math—with at least a dozen clubs featuring live music seven nights a week, three or four bands per night, there's a ton of gigs, with a ton of bands filling them. And, with the shorter sets, bands don't have as much time to make an impression. They've got to give the audience their best shot, with no room for filler. Mach Bell continues: "Today's bands and audiences all seem to specialize a lot more. So if a player wants to detour into, say, some deep Jamaican grooves, first he has to break away from his regular southern rock, or whatever, band and put together a side project." If you go see The Coffin Lids, you're gonna get lo-fi garage rock, a la The Mummies and The Sonics; if you go see Sugabomb, you're gonna get raunchy hard rock; if you go see The Country Doctors, you're gonna get, well, country, obviously. And, for the most part, audiences want to hear what they expect. So, for a musician with multiple musical

driving rhythms. The Marvels' sound is dense, like a brick wall. The Dents' sound has more space, more room for interesting guitar lines, but they're still capable of kicking you in the gut if that's what they think you deserve. But Michelle fits in perfectly in each. As co-front person, she adds both a Shangri-Las type tough girl edge and a sort of Mary Tyler Moore-like sense of classy sexiness to The Dents, while blending in more with The Marvels, almost like one of the boys.

One of the positive byproducts of all this crossing over from one band to another is that there are a lot of friendships between bands that don't play the same style. In fact, the whole scene has a great deal of interconnectedness and camaraderie. Not that this closeness is completely new. Mach Bell again: "The Boston rock community has stayed pretty tight over the years. Around 1976 when Thundertrain was recording the *Live at the Rat* album, I was hanging with bands like DMZ, Willie Loco Alexander's Boom Boom Band, Third Rail, Real Kids, Reddy Teddy, Fox Pass, and The Cars. We'd



Richie Unnatural Axe
(photo by Brian Mosher)



Staffy The Marvels



Michelle
Downbeat Five



Evan
Muck and the Mires

share bills with all of those guys and on our night off we'd go check out newer bands like Thrills and The Neighborhoods and party together afterwards. We spent a lot of good times with local deejays, photographers and fanzine writers, too. I'm glad to see all this camaraderie continuing in Boston but it doesn't always come easy. If you want a whole community to support you, you really have to make an effort to get out and help support the community first. Go to shows!" Or, as Heather DelBaso of International Pen Pal says, "There is a great deal of support and help from the music community in Boston. Most of my shows have been largely attended by other musicians, and I, in turn, like to see their bands as well, not because I feel a sense of obligation, but more because I like to take cues from them as to what

to be constructive—but in my experience they are the exceptions. We just played with some bands in Haverhill that took our new CD into a radio station they were playing on later that night. It's on their play list now. The bands in Boston might be a little competitive, but it's a friendly competition. A rising tide raises all boats, or some shit like that." Jen D'Angora agrees: "There are usually people in other bands willing to help others out with club info, getting shows, and sharing gear. The common misconception about Boston is that the people here are cold. Some of the warmest people I've ever met are in the Boston music scene."

Scene vet Carl Bianucci (bass for Classic Ruins, Johnny & The Jumper Cables, Kenne Highland & His Vatican Sex Kittens, Doom Buggies and Mach

Rock'n'roll has always been the music of sex - either having sex, thinking about sex, wishing you knew what sex was like, whatever. I mean, it's called "rock'n'roll" for a reason.

does and doesn't work on stage. Being relatively new to the 'rock musician' scene, I am always looking for tips and pointers. By going to see my fellow musicians, I can learn by association."

Personally, I've been to shows where, other than me, the entire audience is made up exclusively of members of the other bands on the bill. Of course, that's probably not exactly good news for club owners, since band members don't usually have to pay to get in, and I'm sure the bands themselves would rather there were more fans coming out, but it is indicative of the degree of loyalty between people in different bands. As Eddie Charbonier of the band Kermit's Finger says, "Bands help each other all the time, either with shows or recording stuff, what have you. Whether it's Jonee Earthquake almost single handedly getting the North Shore scene going, Bill from Toxic Narcotic recording and releasing every punk band around, or the guys from the Midnight Creeps telling us where to get the best cheap burgers in Baltimore. Bands share info on venues, on touring, on just about everything. There are exceptions—bands that are not very friendly or don't go out of their way

V) says that the Boston "rock scene has as much and as little sense of community as anything else. My personal feeling is that all bands are jealous of each other's successes, but also wish the nicer people well. Good people are good people; the scene is no exception. In my book, folks like JJ Rassler, Michelle Paulhus, Tara from Mr. Airplane Man are well liked, sometimes due to the fact that they are friendly, fun, and not above extending a hand to other bands, like putting a band on a hot bill with them." Again, though, Carl admits that there's a flipside. "There are the jerks! No names, but one of them is not exactly a real kid, and the other one that comes to mind is a bit of a liar. Hint, hint." I'm not going to help you figure that out, but the folks in Boston will know what Carl means.

Within the scene, there are certain individuals who are more inclined to help out other bands and foster the community atmosphere. One of them is Pete Depressed (The Gobshites and Meat Depressed). He's always trying to help other bands get gigs, booking them on shows with his own bands as well as helping them network with club owners. He's also an organizer. He's put together

a series of shows at the legendary folk club Passim's that he calls "Punks Are Folks." He gets local punk singers to perform solo acoustic sets of their own material. So far, both the artists and the club are happy with the arrangement, since it's bringing a fresh crowd to the venerable room, and is giving a new kind of exposure to some talented songwriters. Pete also has put out two compilation CDs on his Good Cop/Bad Cop Records. He rents a studio for twenty-four hours, lines up twenty-four bands, and lets them run wild. Well, not exactly. Actually, they each get one hour to record one original song. Each band pays a portion of the recording cost, and receives a supply of the CDs to sell at their gigs and through their websites. Again, it's a win/win situation for everyone. Younger bands get the opportunity to experience the recording process at an affordable price, and all the bands get the exposure that goes with having other bands' fans hear them on the compilation.

One of the few exceptions to the "multiple bands" rule is another of my favorite bands, The Country Doctors. Bass player Joe Allonby (formerly of The Modifiers) says, "I do the occasional guest shot here or there with friends or former bandmates. Eric Doberman does also. We're trying to get Eric Moss to do stuff like that as well. It's good for the soul. It gets you thinking different ways. It gets other people to think of you in another way. It expands your audience. None of us really has a 'solo project' or 'project band.'" When I asked Joe about the community aspect of the Boston scene, he had two answers: "Yes and no. Yeah, there is a sense of community between many of the musicians of the Boston scene. This can cut across genres and styles. That's one of the things that have kept me in the Boston music scene. My friends are there. We pull for each other. Now here comes the 'no' side. Every community has its share of dicks. Often, success and talent are inversely proportional. Frustrated performers whose success does not match their self-image can be petty and jealous. They can be backbiting, resentful, and divisive. They perceive the success of others as a personal affront. It ain't pretty. These people are in music for themselves, not the music. But they are there and numerous."

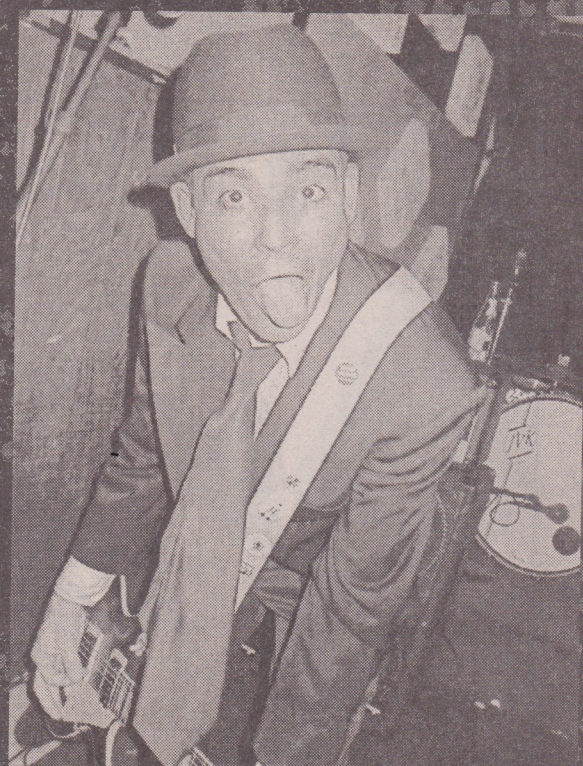
Chris Lamy of The Jabbers (yes, those Jabbers, the ones that used to be G. G. Allin and The Jabbers) thinks that some of the sense of community that exists today is a result of the scene sort of growing up and maturing. "I think the

fact that we (meaning many of the old school bands collectively) are still alive while so many of our friends and bandmates have died young has had kind of a bonding effect on us older punks. I just read a review of the Jabbers' new CD and the reviewer starts out saying that 'The Jabbers are the LEAST likely band to still all be alive.' I was like, oh-oh, better start exercising and eating right. Anyway, we are friends now with bands and individuals who we battled and backstabbed mercilessly in punk's heyday. It was very abrasive at times. It seems so trifling now, but many of us hated the other local bands. Now, the fact that we are alive and able to play gives us something in common.

"The Internet and DIY phenomenon has encouraged that community as well. You can make digital recordings and distribute them yourself through message boards and sites to like-minded bands and fans and zines. The Internet does help punks stay connected and to network with each other and share ideas and info and stuff."

One of the prime examples of the music community on the Internet is The Noise Board, a message board owned and operated by the zine I write for, *The Noise*. You can find every type of musician here, players of every instrument in every style. Whether you want to put a new band together, or just find out where the best shows are happening, The Noise Board is the place to go. Like any message board, there's plenty of extraneous crap too, but for the most part that stuff is just another manifestation of the feeling of community. Bands post MP3s of their newest recordings, they publicize their upcoming gigs, they advertise for new drummers, they arrange transportation to and from shows. It's become a pivotal part of how music gets done in and around Boston.

Rock'n'roll has always been the music of young people, and more than that, it's always been the music of sex—either having sex, thinking about sex, wishing you knew what sex was like, whatever. I mean, it's called "rock'n'roll" for a reason. As Chris Lamy says, "It is all about the ladies." If it's all about the ladies for the Jabbers, then you know it's all about the ladies for younger, better-looking bands. But it's also always been the music of the disenfranchised, the outcasts, the rejected. Which makes me want to tell you about a band I just saw for the first time, three days before Christmas, 2004. They're called The Spoilers, and they have a song with a refrain that goes something like "hey,



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The Marvels**



**Brian
The Curses**

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kid, you're alright, even if your parents don't tell you so." Ever since I saw them at the Beachcomber (in Quincy, on Boston's South Shore), I just can't get this phrase out of my head. I mean, isn't this exactly what brings us all to rock'n'roll in the first place? Don't we come looking for some acceptance, some sense of belonging, a sense of being alright? Most of us—I mean those of us who devote our lives to rock music in one way or another—can't get that kind of thing at home. We can't get it from our families, our co-workers, not even from most of our friends. But a group of four young people with guitars and drums, on a stage, singing a three-minute pop song, can give it to us. It's amazing, really. What's most amazing about it is that The Spoilers aren't a particularly exceptional band. What they are is young, genuine, and passionate about playing rock'n'roll music. They're real. They have fun on stage. They play fast, sing melodies that stick in your head, and

because they don't want people to know when and where they're playing, but because they don't do this for you, they don't play for the audience, they play for themselves. That's what I like about them—they play to make themselves feel alright, 'cause no one else ever told them they were. And when they feel alright, you do, too.

That's the power of rock'n'roll, the power to face down the demons of this society we live in, a society where everything we could ever imagine is only a mouse click away, where the television brings a constant barrage of seemingly critical information right into our living rooms without ever telling us anything that might actually do us any good, without ever telling us that it's alright to be who we are, to be different, to have thoughts and ideas that we don't share with anyone else because they're ours, our own private things. A society where everything is relative, nothing is absolute,

Whether it's Bill from Toxic Narcotic recording and releasing every punk band around, or the guys from the Midnight Creeps telling us where to get the best cheap burgers in Baltimore, bands share info on just about everything.

make you feel like you're alright, even if nobody else ever tells you that you are. They're angry, but not too angry. They're cute, but not too cute, not so cute you can't believe they actually look like this. They act like they like each other. When you walk up to them after their set and tell them they sounded good they're humble, but grateful—not too cool to accept a compliment, but self-critical enough to know that they didn't play as well as they do in their rehearsal space. When you ask them if they have a mailing list you can get on, the lead singer says, "I've got a piece of paper," and then she fishes around in her purse for a minute before producing a folded, wrinkled piece of yellow lined notebook paper. No pen. When you borrow a pen from someone else, and write your name and email address on the paper, and hand it back to her, you have absolutely no confidence that you'll ever actually receive an email from them, not because they don't care about you, or

but where the one absolutely incontrovertible fact is that we are completely alone. But listening to The Spoilers gives you a feeling that none of that matters. And as long as there are bands like The Spoilers, as long as there are songs that remind us that we're alright, then there's hope. And as long as there's hope, then we can all keep getting up in the morning and keep slogging through our day jobs and coming home to watch the TV news. Because we know that we can go to places like The Beachcomber or The Abbey Lounge or TT the Bear's, and surround ourselves with complete strangers who know us better than we know ourselves, and listen to the redemptive sounds of three-chord rock'n'roll played by people who believe as passionately as we do that this is as close as it's possible to get to the proverbial mountaintop. This is as good as it gets. This is alright.



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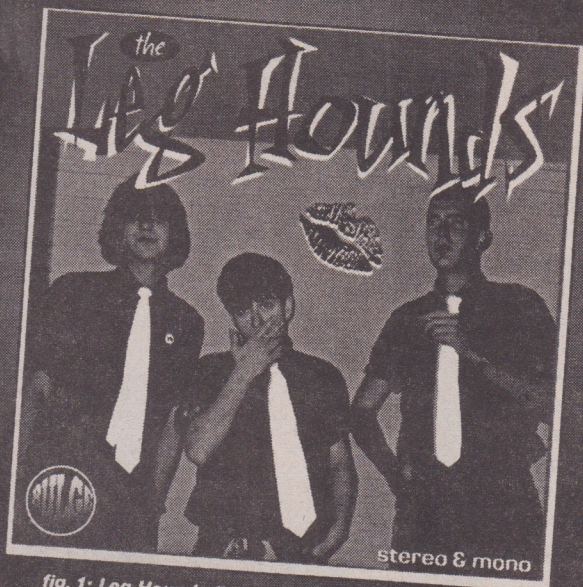


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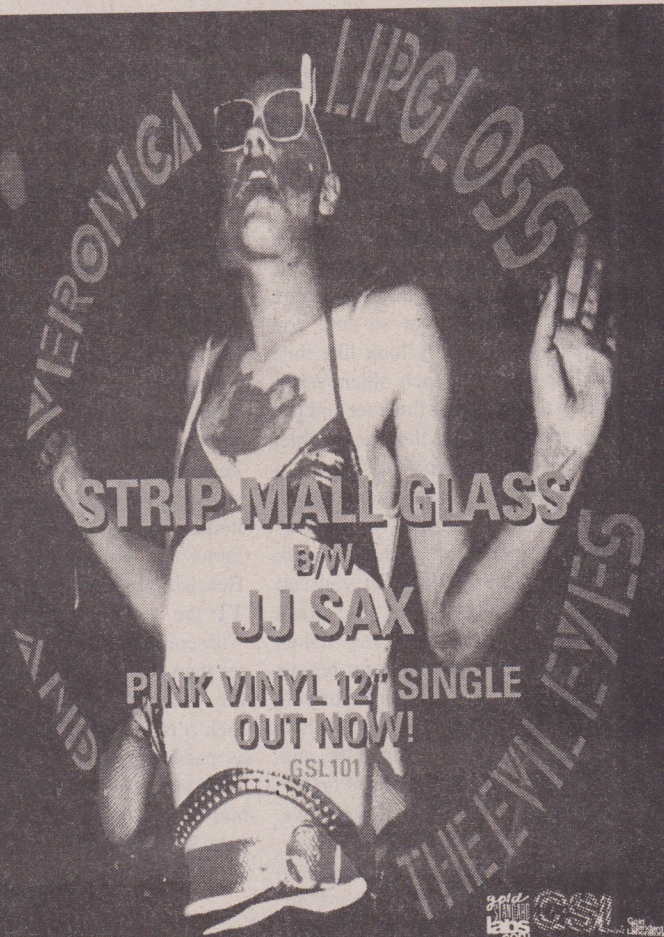


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Dan Monick's Photo Page



Florida

Hey Goober: Full album art is required for review. Pre releases go into the trash.

10 SECONDS TO LIFTOFF/ ANSWER LIES, THE: Split: 7"

This 7" is apparently the first release from Dirt Culture Records, a spinoff of *Dirt Culture* fanzine (of which I have never heard). Both bands are from Las Cruces, New Mexico. Man, what is going on in Arizona and New Mexico these days? All of the rock-inest bands are springing up over there. Is it the desert heat? Shit, it must be. Answer Lies is fast political punk that dropped my chin to my chest. They are an amazing band. You ought to check 'em out. Add this to your to-do list, no doubts about that! 10 Seconds to Liffotf gives off a different vibe: more of a late '70s English punk style. While listening to it, I couldn't tell if the songs are just okay or so fucking good that it's just beyond me. This 7" is one for the history books. —Mr. Z (Dirt Culture)

101, THE: Green Street: CD

Since, alphabetically, this might be the very first review, I want to mention to all bands and labels out there to please check and see if your band fits in with what is covered by this here zine before you submit it for review. Because chances are, you are going to get either me, the grumpy, jaded old guy, or Jimmy Alvarado giving it a shit review. Even worse, if the two of us don't pick it up for months on end, the CD and inserts gets thrown away and we save the case. I'm being honest. That is how it works. So much crap comes through here that we can't even get a dime for trade-in on some of this stuff. I'm saying this as I have to sit through another R.E.M. wannabe that not only bores me, but makes my cats irritable. There is a reason for college radio. So do yourself a favor, save some money, and don't send this kind of stuff to the zine or to my attention. I hope my words caught your attention. —Donofthead (Limekiln)

ABERNETHY:

He Teeny She: CD

Somewhere between Noel Paul Stookey and Peter (of Peter, Paul, and Mary), a Terry Gilliam soundtrack, The The, and sacred music. That said, there is something nice in the soothing-ness of this, but I'm not sure why they would think to send it to us. —Megan (www.joeabernethey.com)

ADICTS, THE:

Rise and Shine: CD

This release from the Adicts has some



There are few things i approach more cheerlessly than the concept of putting up with a guy playing his acoustic guitar in public or on record.

—Rev. Nørh

musical gems as well as some songs that are not as precious. The song "Woke up This Morning" is a muffled mess with a garage rock sound and distorted vocals that simply is not pleasing to the ear. However, the next track, "Black Sheep," is a quintessential Adicts song that is fast paced with catchy riffs and lyrics that are easy to sing along to and jump around to like an idiot. The Adicts have been around for over twenty years and on this album they have a song called "We Looked Back," which expresses their appreciation to their fans as they reflect on the time gone by since they have been a band. The song has a Bob Dylan feel with the vocals sung in a strange talking voice. It is not their best song but the message of gratitude is still there. The best song on the album is "Cuppa Tea Song," in which the Englanders express their desire for home and a cup of tea while in America. The song is very simple but it is simply perfect. "Concert Adicto" is also a fabulous song, which is an instrumental piano mix that includes snippets of their songs being played beautifully on the piano in between classical piano measures. Overall, the album is a pleasant addition for fans of the Adicts, but if you are unfamiliar with their music, a different album such as *Songs of Praise* or *Smart Alex* would be a wiser choice. —Jennifer Moncayo (SOS)

ADVERSARY WORKERS, THE: The Inner Workings of Change: CD

Skrunky noise rock with political lyrics. Wasn't exactly my cup of tea, but dang near anything with lyrics that run contrary to the popular party line can't be all bad. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.collectiverecords.com)

ALLERGIC TO BULLSHIT: You & Me This Is What We're Here for and What We're for Is What We'll Get: 7"

Los Canadians, who Ivy of ATB previously sang for, had a strained appeal for me. The music didn't grab me, but that voice... Ivy sounds like she swallowed rock candy: sweetness and gravel mixed together. She has this desperate, pleading quality to her vocals that could easily make the majority of female blues singers envious. Allergic to Bullshit makes it a lot easier for me to listen because, well, they're fucking awesome. This recording is really dirty. There's so much fuzz that it goes from low-fi to pretty annoying. Even with that in mind, this is well worth picking up, along with their earlier 7", *Train I Ride*. —Megan (Left off the Dial)

ALUMINUM KNOT EYE: Trunk Lunker: CD

Roky Erikson mania meets the Reatards' "record in your bedroom with a bucket for a drum" aesthetic. Sometimes it seems a little bit like they're trying too hard. I bet if you played it at a party, everybody would leave, which I mean as a compliment. —Josh (Trick Knee Productions)

AMERICAN STATIC:

Soundtrack of the Struggle: CD

American Static sounds like they've already sent their demo into TKO. Blue collar, proud-to-be-American, alcohol-encrusted punk. Woo! —Mr. Z (Street Anthem)

ANTISEEN:

Badwill Ambassadors: CD

Things are a bit slower and more on

the "rock" side of the fence than I remember previous efforts being, but they still do the southern scumrock thing quite well. Considering these guys have been around long enough to have played marbles with Moses, it's no surprise their chops are finely honed, and they manage to make something that could easily fall into "pathetic and sad" territory worth a listen. —Jimmy Alvarado (TKO)

ANTISEEN:

One Live Sonofabitch and a Hell of a Lot More: 2CD + DVD

Ugh. Now I realize why I never really got into these guys—a double CD of live tunes and outtakes from the early-to mid- '90s, and mindless thuggery galore. Don't get me wrong—there are some interesting bits on the CDs, but thirty-two tracks is simply too much to take; I like my thuggery as much as anyone else, but it gets old pretty quick. And the production isn't that great, so I kept switching over to Julie Andrews songs to balance out the bad karma just created. Regarding the DVD, the live stuff is more of the same, but now you've gotta look at them. HOWEVER, the Destructo Video included herein was actually fairly interesting and entertaining; if you're a fan, I suppose that in itself will be worth the price. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Steel Cage)

ARM, THE:

Self-titled: 8-song CD

Androgyny, angularity, and a cold-processed fusion of Wire and Lifter Puller: all neon arrows point to art rock. For this guy, art rock's like a blister forming under a toenail. There's a point where it's gotta pop, where you have to go through the ugliness of drilling the X-acto tip right into the nail and the first head of blood and pus pools up... then push, push, push. The Arm, although hard to put an ear around at first, deliver in the end with a perfectly ugly, dance-in-the-doom release. Folks who dig the in-a-dark-butcher's-freezer sound of Joy Division would do well to pick this up. Don't let the dodgy bronze goose on the cover fool you, it's pretty damn good. —Todd (Last Gasp; www.lastgasprecords.com)

BAFABEGIYA:

Those Who Die Dancing: 7"

Rebellious, rambunctious hardcore with rebellious, rambunctious lyrics. Songs are put together well, and I bet these guys smoke live. —Jimmy Alvarado (Spacement)

BANG SUGAR BANG:

Thwak Thwak: CD

Okay, let's get something straight: some songs should not be redone. "Sex Beat" is such a song, and redoing it with vocals that sound like Siouxsie Sioux with a tummy ache only makes matters worse. The rest of this wasn't too painful a listen, but after hearing what they did to what is these quintessential Gun Club track, I had a hard

time focusing on any of their merits.
 -Jimmy Alvarado
 (www.bangsugarbang.com)

BASSHOLES, THE: Broke Chamber Music: CD

It's pretty easy to bag on modern punk rock. Lots and lots of people have embraced the superficial aspects of it while ignoring what's important. Lots and lots of people have taken a visceral, powerful kind of music and glossed it over, clipped its nails, and purted its hair up real nice. Somewhere along the way, it got turned into a cool police badge. Not to put too fine a point on it, but that really sucks. As much as that sucks, it doesn't mean that great punk rock doesn't exist anymore. Just because some bondage-panted future accountant is bitching about his deli tray backstage doesn't mean that two falling-down drunks from Ohio can't bash their instruments and howl their guts out. It's the blues, the cockroach blues, the hell blues, the goddamn blood red blues that can't be faked. It's music for music's sake, not to show off fancy sleeve tattoos. It's everything that's great about America condensed like soup into an hour of Bassholes singles and outtakes. Familiarize yourself with it. -Josh (Secret Keeper)

BASSHOLES: Self-titled: CD

The scene: the world's busiest freeway. The time: 4 PM. Me: thinking about class war as another BMW cuts me off. Enter the Bassholes. No artifice. No hipster nuthuggers swaggering for a future shampoo commercial. No dilettante "oh yeah!" gospel soft serve. Just religious music without the religion. Folk music with the hippie overtones replaced by daggers. Music just made by folks. That salve at the time when you need some salvation the most. As alive and real and sturdy as an oak tree. Smokey as bad memories burning up, still stinging your eyes. Modern blues, and not in a Blues Hammer type of way, but of musicians pushing back all the bad shit, reaching over your shoulder, and flipping a happy switch. While I doubt the Bassholes will ever be televised worldwide, I know this: this is the type of music that'll protect you. The world's busiest freeway just gave me the time to sit and listen and realize this: what a great fuckin' record. -Todd (Dead Canary)

BELLRAYS, THE: The Red, White, and Black: CD

Y'know, I could go on and on like so many other fans and critics about how crucial the Bellrays are; how they bend the definition of "punk" in the most glorious of ways; how they manage to conjure all the best of Big Brother and the Holding Company, MC5, and Tina Turner; how they take punk, soul, and garage rock's most crucial elements and boil them down into a—dare I say it—holy mélange of "good goddamn, this rocks so friggin' hard"—ness, with a side of whoop-ass to give it spice. I could further describe them as the perfect blend of the sacred and profane—a voice surely blessed by the gods

merged with banshee-howl guitars and a pagan, devil rock backbeat. But, you know, I'm not gonna do that. Just pick up a copy yourself and revel in THE WORD, brothers and sisters, put forth by some of the Church of Rock'n'Roll's most venerated prophets. As they put it so eloquently on their CD booklet, "Soul is the teacher, punk is the preacher," and to not heed that message would be absolute folly. -Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

BENT OUTTA SHAPE: Self-titled: 12" EP

Considering their name, it's ironic that the record I got was bent almost like a taco. Some carefully applied heat and pressure, a little patience, and it's a playable, wavy potato chip. So, this is how the radio works on most people? A band you've never heard of before, you instantly like because they simultaneously remind you of ten bands you already like (this time, reshaped and tossed and bruised, holding a delicious burrito), and you want to buy every fucking thing by them as soon as possible. It's scary how much I liked this when the needle first touched down and I'm happy to say that the satisfaction hasn't waned in the twenty plays since. Take the infectious train-hopping, ashtray pop punk of Rivethead, the good-smelling fungus and fumes of Toys That Kill, the curly pubes left on the soap by Dick Army, and the indie rock by way of falling down while attempting stupid tricks on your bike sound of the Carrie Nations and that starts getting at what Bent Outta Shape do. Charming as all hell. Comes with a zine. -Todd (Drunk Tank, (\$8.50 ppd.)

BILL BONDSMEN, THE:

The Swingin' Sounds of...: 7"
 After a demo that showed considerable promise (even if it needed mixing something awful) comes one fucker of a hardcore record steeped in its influences yet refraining from rehashing the same ol' shit. Things are not too fast, not too slow, and there's enough of a sense of humor to keep things from becoming a preach-fest. Subjects include stupid Nazi skins ("stupid tattoos on your forehead and neck/poor pathetic slob/shoulda got 'this space for rent'/have fun hunting for a job"), tooth decay, telemarketing, and "the Dark Crystal." Add some punny song titles (including "Garthim Attack," a sly reference to a Mob 47 tune) and you've got some entertaining listening. -Jimmy Alvarado (Fourteegee Profuctions)

BILL BONDSMEN:

The Swinging Sounds of...: 7"
 When ugly is beautiful and fat means more time to live after the Apocalypse. Dashes of N.O.T.A., Die Kreuzen, and The Offenders, in my humble opinion, are always going to put some sharp, interesting corners on any hardcore band (I'm using hardcore in the original early '80s sense, not the '90s Mr. Universe with bad attitudes, metal masturbation-as-a-crew sense). When

RAZZORCAKE

Doesn't really have anything to do with records, but *Wild Zero's* a rad movie. You should see it.



Love has no borders. nationalities or genders.

THESE ARE THE TOP 7's SINCE THE LAST MAG.

Underground Medicine Mailorder, Connecticut

1. **Spits**, *Spend the Night in a Haunted House* (Missile X)
2. **Kajun SS**, *\$40 Quartet* (Die Slaughterhaus/Shattered)
3. **Final Solutions**, *Eye Don't Like You* (Shit Sandwich)
4. **Carbonas**, *Frothing at the Mouth* (Douchemaster)
5. **Neins**, *Skinny Black Jeans* (self-released)
6. **Feelers/Blank Its**, split (Contaminated)
7. **Bags**, *Survive* (Artifix)
8. **Tyrades**, *On Your Video* (Smart Guy)
9. **Kung Fu Escalator**, *I'm Walking* (Nasty Products)
10. **Suspicious**, *We're All Wrong* (Nerve Wracking)

Sean Carswell,
 slacker who didn't do his reviews.

1. **The Drips**, *Mexico*, (Hostage)
2. **Chinese Telephones**, self-titled, (Dingus)
3. **This Is My Fist**, *I Don't Want to Startle You...* (Left Off the Dial)
4. **Riverboat Gamblers/Electric Eel Shock**, split, (Gearhead)
5. **Minority Blues Band/J Church**, split, (Snuffy Smile)
6. **Career Suicide**, *Signals EP*, (Slasher)
7. **Zero Fast/Shotwell**, split, (Snuffy Smile)
8. **Fucked Up**, *Generation* (Slasher)
9. **Three Minute Movie/Annalise**, split, (Snuffy Smile)
10. **One Reason**, *Defiance*, Ohio (Anti-Creative)

Disgruntled Mailorder, California

1. **Dirtbombs**, *Merit* (Kapow)
2. **Leeches**, *Integration* (Kapow)
3. **Earaches**, *Freedumb Fries* (Steel Cage)
4. **Real Losers**, *Go Nutzoid* (Wrench)
5. **Fang**, *Pissed Off* (Malt Soda/ Delta Pop)
6. **Geisha Girls**, *Buckingham* (Backflip)
7. **Detroit Cobras**, *Cha Cha Twist* (Rough Trade)
8. **The Rebel**, *Exciting New Venue for Soccer and Execution* (SDZ)
9. **Golden Boys**, *Got No Home* (Perpetrator)
10. **Night Terrors**, *Feel Me* (Perpetrator)

said no-bullshit band doesn't take themselves seriously, name drops *The Dark Crystal* ("the greatest documentary of political struggle ever"), body checks *The Wall*, and has one of the best "I shoulda been brushing my teeth" songs I've ever heard, well, then you're on to something. It's like finding a piece of pre-chewed candy on the street, yet it still has its own flavor, even with all the pebbles, strands of hair, and slivers of old glass. Tastes better than it first looks. —Todd (Fourteegge Profuctions)

BLACKLIST BRIGADE: *Slit-Nose Hymns: CD*

If I didn't know any better, I'd think this was Stranglehold. Old-school street punk with all the background whoa-oh's. Shane McGowan inspired many a working class drunk punk as well. One acoustic tune has an accordion, I think. There are a few random piano interludes with sea waves crashing in the background as well. Arg! And a Jolly Rodgers to ya! I could see TKO Records putting this out. —Buttertooth (Self-released)

BLACKLIST BRIGADE: *Slit-Nose Hymns: CD*

One of my fantasies is that Joe Strummer didn't really die, he just pulled the ultimate "I don't want to be famous" trick, took a U-turn, and went back to being in a tiny English garage band. The Blacklist Brigade fulfill that fantasy. '77-inspired punk rarely sounds this plainly inspired in 2005, but these guys have been turning what is usually a bunt situation into a series of home runs. They're not afraid to slide around in the mud of a long, piano-damaged ballad then kick the next song like they're playing soccer with skulls in a graveyard. It's all perfectly lo-fi, yet clear in message as burning a flag on an embassy's steps. Since the banner holders of this genre seem to be working on clothing lines and listening to their personal trainers now, here's your chance to hear a band that's busy doing some serious reclamation of rebellion. —Todd (No Front Teeth)

BLITZKRIEG/PARADOX *UK: Split: CD*

Blitzkrieg were one of the second wave Brit punk bands that had put out releases in the early '80s. Paradox UK were the band that formed after the ashes and continued on in the '90s. Blitzkrieg started, as many of the bands of the time, playing more a traditional oi sound and gradually changed their sound with the influence of Discharge, which made their music faster and more aggressive in the same manner as the Varukers. Paradox UK is a band that I saw their releases around but never had the urge to pick anything up. The tracks featured here have the remnants of the crossover period that has tinges of a Motörhead sound. These tracks are the weaker of the two bands due to the thin guitar sound. It comes out as

average, but nothing to grab you by. The Blitzkrieg tracks were far better produced and have energy. I'm not sure where these tracks were compiled from, but it is a welcome opportunity to hear bands that I didn't really pay attention to when they were active. —Donofthedeatd (Street Anthem)

BOB BURNS AND THE BREAKUPS: *C-Store, Baby!: 7"*

Man, Milwaukee has got some awesome shit going on right now. I dunno for sure if these guys are from Milwaukee, but it's on Dingus so I'm guessing they are. Six songs of driving, hyperactive punk that occasionally drifts into garageland. I get the feeling they're better live, but this record still seems to be a pretty good document for this band. I just wish they'd put more info in the record. —Ben Snakepit (Dingus)

BOMBSHELL ROCKS: *Love for the Microphone: CDEP*

An acoustic song is no way to start off what otherwise is a pretty damn good little CD. Bombshell Rocks have been around since about '96 and have consistently put out quality records. They never disappoint. It's just if you are going to put out only six songs, why waste one track by making it acoustic, let alone starting the CD off with it? Skip track one and you have an EP to listen to over and over again. —Toby (Combat Rock)

BRISTLE:

30 Blasts from the Past: CD
This is the whole discography of a Seattle based street/gutter punk band. I've heard worse gutter bands. I'm sure some crusty, train-hopping patch punks would appreciate some of this. At best, it's just fucking rehashed shit, though. I prefer the Germs or Quincy Punx. Every guitar solo sounds the same and the lyrics are kind of steakheaded. They do have a song about Lake Union Pub in Seattle. I've been there once, that bar sucks, too. —Buttertooth (Rodent Popsicle)

BUTCHERS' ORCHESTRA, THE: *Stop Talking about Music: CD*

Voodoo Rhythm stuff often falls in either the "hit" or "miss" bins for me, but every once in a while something manages to straddle the fence between the two. Such is the case here. This is pretty standard garage rock fodder, aided in delivery by Tim Kerr's production skills. It ain't bad, but nothing about it really stands out, either. Plop it on the stereo and it'll work fine as background music. —Jimmy Alvarado (Voodoo Rhythm)

CHAINSAW:

We Are Not Very Nice: CD
Yeah, well, you're not very good either, so I guess it's a horse apiece. One school of thought in the gnarled tapestry of '70s punk was that if one

were to take the Hard Rock of the day, forcibly remove all its virtuosity, pomposity and pretty-boy-osity and replace said distastefully effete quanta with vileness, aggression, and "attitude," the result would be, like, *punk rock*, and we would be good to go, forever and ever, Amen. It's not really my place to pass judgment either way on what people in bands in the '70s thought was "punk" or not, but I will state that the notion of Punk Rock as Hard Rock's sleazy underground cousin has never been one I've been overly keen to embrace. There are some decent moments here (most notably the deliciously crude "Polaride Pictures" and the faux-live material [including a serviceable run-through of "No Fun" and, best of all, canned applause!]), but, all in all, this band sounds a little too much like an outfit who would've shared the bill with the Sleaze Sisters in that *Times Square* movie for my Stripes, Chucks 'n' Spikes tastes. I wonder if they ever played any shows with that band called Blitzkrieg Bop? BEST SONG: "Polaride Pictures" BEST SONG TITLE: "Polaride Pictures" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Baker's Dozen" is not track thirteen. —Rev. Nørb (Dionysus)

CHI-PIG: *Miami: CD*

I'm sitting here shaking my head and wondering who told this band they should record this shit. Sing-song, cheesy pop with a Primus-like bass line, although apparently this was released in the late '70s, so I guess you could say about Primus, "...annoying Chi-Pig bass lines." As if you needed more reason to stay away, they have a song called "Stinking Skin Sac (Involuntary Body Functions)." Art rock... {{shiver}} —Kat Jetson (Chi-Pig)

CHUCK LATENITE:

Clean Cut Disguise: CD

There are few things I approach more cheerlessly than the concept of putting up with a guy playing his acoustic guitar in public or on record. In the thankfully limited number of circumstances where I have been required to stand before some i-will-now-stand-here-and-play-my-acoustic-guitar-and-sing-and-you-will-now-listen-to-me-doing-it types, I always feel like I age about another fifteen years in the first two minutes: My feet immediately feel like they used to after eight hours of janitorial duties in work boots; my vertebrae start aching; my jacket gets twenty pounds heavier. If I sit down, the chair becomes uncomfortable. If I buy a drink, the drink becomes uncomfortable. My ass feels like I've just driven from New Jersey to Indiana without a piss break. I am, in so many words, "not really a fan." Along comes Chuck Latenite. He sends me his "acoustic punk rock" album because—he claims—he has "rocked out" to records I have made (that's possible?), and it would please him to know that I at least briefly

"rocked out" to his. Okay, fair enough. "I just want to give that feeling a-rock-n-roll gave to me," as Billy Idol once said (cutting himself in for the bonus plan afterwards). Virtually everything I have ever heard by a punk rock guy playing an acoustic guitar has been utter dogshit, granted, but at least I don't have to stand and watch the guy play—I can pop the CD in the deck of my rigTM and listen to it while I'm driving. That way, when my ass feels sore and stiff like I've been driving, I won't know the difference. The first song is an instrumental, "Resin Party"—presumably Chuck's attempt at birthing the acoustic equivalent of "Heatseeker." I am more amused than put off: Whenever I see some dude playing songs on an acoustic guitar, they always do this one thing—*whuh, whuh, whuh, chicka-wicka-wacka wuh-wuh*—for what seems like an eternity—and here Mr. Latenite has gone and based his entire opening salvo on—you guessed it—*whuh, whuh, whuh, chicka-wicka-wacka wuh-wuh*. Well, fine. Guy plays good, anyway. I drive along as the album continues. It soon becomes clear that Chuck is a purist, who appears to believe in a grand total of Four Things: 1. Getting drunk; 2. Getting high; 3. Lust; 4. Rock & Roll. That's it. Fuck TwinkiesTM, fuck JeepsTM, fuck oyster crackers, he's got his four components of life and everything else is unworthy of comment (although he does take a bit of a detour into 5. Math, but I view this diversion as merely a tool used to further facilitate #3). A number of songs pass. It begins to strike me that not only is Chuck's acoustic guitar playing not uninteresting, his voice is really cool as well. He's got it reverberated and mixed down under the guitars, so he sounds like some street-smart but otherwise mildly retarded Elvis/Gene/Lux type, darkly percolating away while never hiccupping anything much more potentially charismatic than "I get drunk to rock 'n' roll / I smoke pipe to rock 'n' roll." Amazingly, no matter how venerable the subject matter gets—doggy-styling "white girls without tattoos," et al—things never come off with an obnoxious swagger, because the guy is NOT singing about drinking and fucking and rocking and getting high in order to yell "HEY! LOOK AT ME! I'M DRINKING AND FUCKING AND ROCKING AND GETTING HIGH!", but is, in fact, offering a humble and heartfelt hosanna of praise to HIS GODS AND MASTERS. It is fucking completely pure. COMPLETELY. But, then again, y'know, it IS still one guy beating on an acoustic guitar, and, as indicated, I don't have much faith in the medium. But then—stunningly, as these things tend to be—there is the Unforeseen Moment of Divine Greatness: "I Want You To Be My Girl." Lyrics in toto: "I want you to be my girl, yeah I want you to be my girl, I want you to be my girl tonight." One voice

singing, one guitar beating out a trip-hammer neo-Leg Hounds rhythm, one guitar playing wild-ass acoustic leads off said rhythm. Rinse, lather, repeat. Fucking **PERFECT** (to all those whom i routinely denigrate for writing shit-simple but imperfect songs: Please take note of how, in a song that uses NINE WORDS total, the artist is actually able to convey a relatively broad [sorta] range of feeling by subtly placing the word "want" on the stressed first syllable of the first two lines, but locating the word "I" on that same syllable in the last line. That's why HE'S Chuck Latenite, and you're just squares with electric guitars who couldn't even hold serve for rock 'n' roll against the guys with the backwards baseball caps and turntables!). Chuck Latenite, if you are not **THE SHIT**, then you are, at minimum, the well-masticated contents of the small intestine which, given enough time and the kindly intercession of the right manner of bacteria, are slated to one day *become* The Shit. I am currently rethinking my stance on the acoustic guitar as a worthwhile implement of rocking, as well as pondering the general outmodedness of musics requiring cumbersome amplification devices and such. I can say no more at present. **BEST SONG:** duh, pay attention, asshole. **BEST SONG TITLE:** I dunno, but the best line is "A hundred squared is what? Probably like ten thousand? I'm so blues that I live in public housing!" from "Low Number Blues" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** This dude must really love The Rock 'n' Roll if he actually figured out the words to "Right Now" by Teengenerate! -Rev. Nørb (Braindead)

COACHWHIPS:

Peanut Butter and Jelly Live at the Ginger Minge: CD
The Scared of Chaka van, sans muffler, pre-Shins, yet full of cocaine and quasi-legal fireworks, leaves Albuquerque at 3:00 PM, MST traveling at an estimated 73 MPH, West on I-40. The Sonics van, circa when they were all alive, leaves the Northwest, and travels South on I-5 at 55 MPH. At what point do they crash into one another, because neither van has good brakes? Never, but the Coachwhips give their best musical interpretation of the event, down to the keyboards flying out the window and getting run over by a passing semi. And some underrated blues musician who never got his due and is known by neither you or I is killed in the wreckage (you can hear his guitar get smashed over and over again). It's a mess that somehow works like a beautiful accident. (Recorded by former FM Knives bad-snacks, Chris Woodhouse.) -Todd (Narnack)

CONFORMISTS, THE: Two Hundred: CD

Decidedly not conformists, the Conformists come on like the Shaggs confusing their Unsane and Don Caballero covers, all wacked rhythms

and dissonance and weird chords. It's like watching a goddamn Rain Man recite the first three hundred prime numbers: there's order there, but damned if you or I would ever see it. One loopy nugget of fuggetty fugget. -Cuss Baxter (Collective)

COULIER:

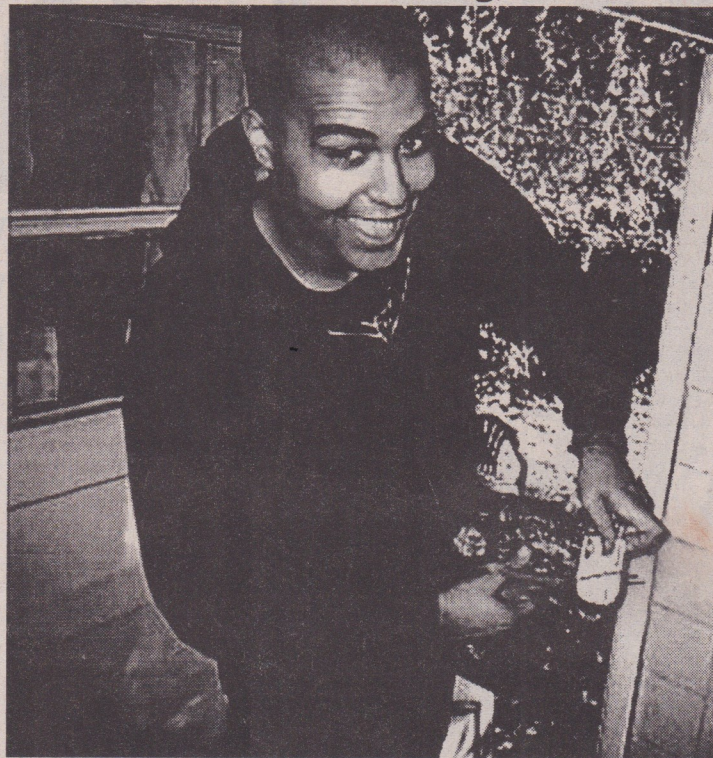
Cool, Cooler, Coulier: CD

Three piece instrumentalists which consists of two guitarists and a drummer. A mixture of early Butthole Surfers meets Rollins Band kind of metal or grindcore twistedness. You have to have a taste for the abstract to like this one. -Donofthead (Stickfigure)

COUP, THE: Party Music: CD

The best hip hop gives me the same rush that hearing Black Flag for the first time did—that giddy feeling that this might be the first time anything has ever sounded this cool, the uncontrollable urge to tear a hole in the status quo. Every album I've heard from the Coup thus far has elicited that response. They deal in a species of rhyme that is an amalgamation of grooves deep from the Zapp vaults of funk, Public Enemy's fearless political savvy, and punk's incendiary assault on the power structure. Like Chuck D, rapper Boots walks the walk, never back-pedaling and always willing to say what he means. To wit, when this album was originally released in September 2001, the original cover, featuring Boots and DJ Pam the Funkstress with the twin towers of the World Trade Center exploding behind them (ostensibly through the force of their music), it was obviously one of those really unfortunate coincidences when reality decides to imitate art. Nonetheless, the album cover vaulted the group into the media spotlight, and for the next few months Boots was forced to defend both the album and his position that, given the long history of US atrocities meted out on other countries in the name of foreign policy, he was not surprised in the least that someone had decided that a little payback was in order, a sentiment that strikes at the core of the nation's cognitive dissonance with regards to the effect of what is done in its name. Eventually the cover was changed to a less provocative cover featuring a hand holding a martini glass filled with gasoline (a Molotov cocktail, get it?), but the songs, savage attacks on the system, remained intact. Lyrically, this isn't more fodder to further fuel the "Black man is violent and oversexed/Black woman is a whore" stereotypes that permeate mainstream, corporate hip hop, but rather yet another clarion call to the powers that be that the many at the bottom are getting plenty tired of being pissed on by the arrogant, wealthy few on top and that the time is at hand when the chickens will, indeed, come home to roost. Herein the listener will find subjects covering "5 Million Ways to Kill a CEO," turning the system upside down, battling the rich ("This whole

Roadhouse Tunes! is fucking awesome



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system works for you to kick it in Paris/or roll through Hong Kong in a Rickshaw carriage/so when you spend a dollar that's ten seconds of my time/and when you spend a billion/that's my life and that's a crime/cuz for me life is hard like the track I'm reppin' on/callin' for the freedom of the backs that you steppin' on"), battling the police, and being down with the underdog. Musically, this bounces hard with the best of 'em, as the Coup make music of substance that is simultaneously angry and fun, an approach that leans more towards prankster agitators like Abbie Hoffman and Crass than dour rebels who have forgotten that insurrection can be cause for celebration. Even if you haven't a passing interest in hip hop, consider this mandatory for the collection, 'cause rebel jams this fearless are hard to come by. -Jimmy Alvarado (Epitaph)

CRIPPLED PILGRIMS:

Down Here: Collected

Recordings (1983-1985): CD

The smart folks at Reaction Recordings have given us a great gift by putting this DC outfit's music on CD for the first time. This features both their Fountain of Youth records on one disc. Quirky polished pop with winding guitar solos that seem to jet off into the stratosphere. Stand-out tracks on the *Head Down Hand Out* EP include "People Going Nowhere" and "Dissolving." "Pretend Not to

Care" and "Oblivious and Numb" from the *Under Water* full-length are also fantastic. Scott Wingo's guitar offers many different shades and textures on each track while Jay Mogila's mysterious vocals portray intriguing puzzles that can't easily be deciphered. The songs are held together by the inventive bass riffs of Mitch Parker (ex-Government Issue) and Dan Joseph rumbles away on the big kit. If you liked bands like Dumpttruck or Love Tractor, Crippled Pilgrims should blow you away with these undiscovered gems. -Sean Koepenick (Parasol)

DAREDIABLO:

Twenty Paces: CD

Prog rock is not normally my cup o' tea, but this record works for me at an instinctive level, even if it does get a bit repetitive. The combo is made up of drums, keyboard, and guitar, and they can do a helluva lot with that set up. There are no vocals, so instead it's up to the music to evoke feelings, emotions, and gut reactions, making interpretation and appreciation that much more murky and personal for the listener. Robert Frost once said that a poem changes with every reader of it, and I suspect that the same would be true of this record, but once I knew what the record said to me, I lost interest quickly. -The Lord Kveldulfr (Southern)

PENNYWISE

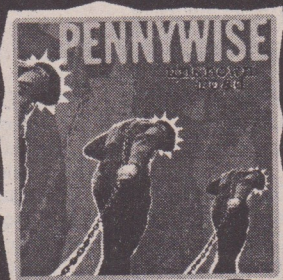
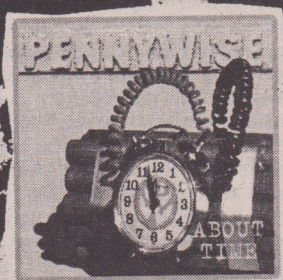
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DARREN "DEICIDE"**KRAMER: *Rockin' Til the Apocalypse*: CD**

One man blues with whine where there should be grit. I did learn almost all possible rhymes (or close rhymes) for dumb: one, begun, everyone, over-come, cranium, become, succumb, pendulum, drum, tedium, hum, scum, done, slums, kingdom, ones. Dude, every line doesn't have to rhyme.

—Megan (Ever Reviled)

DEAD MEADOW:***Feathers*: CD**

Drug rock of the 100 percent bummer variety: limp vocals echo over tepid rivers of wah and flange with very few and far between actual pieces of rock poking through. Ideally, you'd have quite a number of rocks sticking up, to improve the recreational quality of those bodies of water. —Cuss Baxter (Matador)

DEADONES U.S.A.:***There Is No Vacation*: CD**

Although not deplorable, the Deadones U.S.A. rely on the Bar Rock 101 handbook a bit too heavily for my tastes, from the standardized riffs, the too-often-repeated choruses, to the flat lyrics, to the "didn't I hear this song already?" reaches to the CD player. There are ways to get around it—ways that the Loud Pipes, The Candy Snatchers, and the B-Movie Rats busted open—but this album sounds pretty much like the hundreds of bands I sit through, wishing beer prices weren't so high, waiting for the band I came to see to take the stage.

—Todd (No Front Teeth)

DEL CIELO:***Us Vs. Them*: CD**

Sleater-Kinney wannabes trying desperately to capture the sweet angst of the Corin/Carrie vocal play. And unlike the important relevance of S-K, this just sounds average and dated.

—Kat Jetson (Lovitt)

DEL PSYCHOS:***The Fajita Monologues*: CD**

First thing that came to mind was this band sounds like the Monkees. The melodies are the key and they give me the same feeling I had when I first heard the Redd Kross record *Third Eye*. Bubblegum pop with multi-layered harmonies and a production that is super clean. Perfect soundtrack to a '70s romantic comedy for television.

—Donofthedeath (Lightning Bug)

DEL PSYCHOS:***The Fajita Monologues*: CD**

While it would be easy (and unfair) to dismiss these guys as a pop band with more than their share of '60s influence, one can hear a cornucopia of different bands and sounds in there, from the early work of the Who and the Byrds to later power pop darlings like the Quick, as well as a twinge of '80s paisley underground, and maybe even a little bit of the Dickies thrown into

them multi-part harmonies as well. A tough dance it is these days to do this stuff effectively, but they manage to do so quite well. A glance at the song-writing credits indicates these guys (or at least their guitarist/vocalist J.R. Jones) have been slogging it out for at least twenty years, and it shows. Good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Lightning Bug)

DEMON'S CLAWS:**Self-titled: CD**

From Montreal comes flying an irresistible bone for the mushmouth-and-rootsfuzz camp of the Billy Childish/Dan Melchior axis (though a little more country than Childish and less Zeppelin than Melchior), with a good bit of Soledad Brothers and Bassholes chucked in for North American flavor. Best thirty-nine minutes yet this year. —Cuss Baxter (Dead Canary)

DENTS, THE:***Time for Biting*: CD**

Female-fronted pop punk is a touchy subject for a lot of people. How do you get around that one of the most obvious parts of their music is a female voice? It smacks of being a ghetto until bands like the Dents, the Soviettes, and Beautys come along and smash that shit to bits. The voices are just the starting point, not the finish line. I posit this: The Dents have recorded the album that the Eyneliners have been shooting for for the better part of a decade. This album's filled with super-catchy songs that don't all blend into one another. It's sexy without relying on being cutesy, rockin' without being bitchy or man-hating. Everything—from the recording, to the delivery, to the song structures—is clear, raucous, sonorous, and exciting. It's one of those records where my favorite song has changed four times until I came to the conclusion of, "Why split hairs?" This record's an amazing debut. —Todd (Abbey Lounge)

DETONATIONS:***Spy You in a Magazine*: 7"**

I like a lot of stuff that Big Neck puts out, so I was kind of disappointed by this record. The music is fine; they seem to be pretty talented and they come up with catchy hooks, but the songs go on long enough to turn the catchy hooks into annoying reminders that the song is still going on. And I'm not too psyched about the guy's voice, either. If you want to sing like a robot, sing like a robot. Robots don't try to hit different notes with every word. The B-side is a Chrome cover. I don't know the original but it sounds like the A Frames but with the same guy who sang the A-side. Buy a Sweet JAP, Lost Sounds, Baseball Furies, Tyrades, or Trailer Park Tornadoes record from this label instead. —Josh (Big Neck)

DEVIL IS ELECTRIC, THE: *I've Never Trusted a Revolutionary That Was Afraid to Dance and a Bunch of Other Stuff*: CD

As the album title mentions, this is a re-release of TDIE's very cool CD that came out a few years ago, along with a bunch of 7" and comp tracks that you might otherwise never get a chance to hear and a few songs from pre- and post-TDIE bands. These folk-punks always makes me feel like I can change the world, one humble step at a time, and remind me that there really are some genuinely down-to-earth people out there who want to make a difference. There are few DIY labels that like to cram as much music as possible on to one CD (not to mention for it to be as inexpensive as possible), and Plan-it-X is one of 'em, so you're sure to get a bang for your buck (this CD only costs \$5 ppd!). Twenty-five tracks here, though there are actually way more songs than that, as the last two tracks are entire EPs (one being the *Disarm 7"*—the band who had originally been Operation: Cliff Clavin and later morphed into TDIE). Sadly enough, TDIE disarmed (get it?!) in 2003, but Chris and Hannah are still playing together as Ghost Mice. Not the best sound quality, but lots of good songs about how great and how horrible we humans are.

—Heela (Plan-it-X)

DEXATEENS, THE:***Red Dust Rising*: CD**

I can't believe I got assigned an Eagles album to review and it's not even the one with "Life In The Fast Lane" on it. What a rip. BEST SONG: Duh, "Life In The Fast Lane." I guess I also liked that song about having to eat your lunch all by yourself a little bit, too. BEST SONG TITLE: "Red Dust Rising," because it might be some sort of veiled reference to Kryptonite vapors. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Dexateens" can be made into many interesting anagrams, such as "Sex Ed Ante," "See Ax Dent," and "Texas Eden." —Rev. Nørp (Estrus)

DIE ROTZZ:***Tugboat 45*: 7"**

Decent enough thud-punk here. Doesn't set the barn a-burnin' or anything, but it'll do the trick in a pinch. —Jimmy Alvarado (Die Slaughterhaus)

DOG ASSASSIN:**Self-titled: 7"**

Uppity activist rock that comes in a nice hand-sewn cloth cover that I'll be able to use as a hot pad whenever I make my White Castle and Hot Dog casserole. Ah, just kidding. I'm sure these dumpster diving vegan kids are well meaning as all get up, but sometimes this ossified über-earnestness makes me want to shove a flute up my ass and fart out a Clay Aiken tune while I walk on my hands. Don't get

me wrong; these are serious subjects, to be sure, but I don't necessarily want a hot coffee colonic each time I drop the needle down on a record. Bands like the Dead Kennedys and MDC proved long ago that it's possible for a chippy punk band to tackle serious social issues without all that damn gravity. I was hoping that, with a name like "Dog Assassin" that this would be a lot funnier. Sorry, I guess I'm just not feeling all that serious this month. —Aphid Peewit (Spacement)

DRAGOS, LOS:**Self-titled: CD**

I'm a sucker for trashy, reverb-drenched garage rock. Growing up on Mudhoney and finding bands like the Mummies, the Black Lips, the Sonics, New Bomb Turks, and a slew of others only reinforces the scummy pride this shit exudes. Wanky guitar solos are ruling on this fifteen-song sludge fest. Good to drink or drop acid to. These Italians probably admire the 13th Floor Elevators and Mark Arm. Makes you feel raunchy. I dig it! —Buttertooth (Nicotine)

DRUNKEN BOAT/ BENT OUTTA SHAPE:**Split: 7"**

Drunken Boat: wide-eyed DIY punk in the vein of Allergic to Bullshit and This Is My Fist, where the lady vocalist rasps like she's got carpet burns on her larynx and sounds like all the instruments were bought at the same garage sale. Nothing wrong with that. That said, they're a little standard, but their enthusiasm's infectious. Bent Outta Shape: Feels like the tip of a deep iceberg, like listening to just three early Replacements songs off of *Stink*. You absolutely know that there's some deep, fun, drunk shit going on and this is just a great start. Includes an acoustic ditty that's neck and neck with the material on The Tim Version's country 10". Man, oh man. —Todd (Drunk Tank)

EMOK: *Shove Your****Head into the Ground and Feed It to the Earth*: CD**

I'm not sure what I think about this one, but I think that's good. It seems like it's bridging a no-longer-distant gap between between arty-leaning hardcore and a Korn-wannabe band, so upon first listen I immediately reached for my can of anti-art pesticide spray and a cudgel. But I think the blurring of lines is a good and healthy thing and should be encouraged. Categorization is something that should be pounded into the dirt like a bag full of wriggling maggots. Plus, there's actually something on this disc that sounds musical to my ears and that's rare for self-aware crossbreeds of this sort. A bit studied for my thick-skulled tastes, but all in all not bad. I hope this doesn't mean I'm getting soft. —Aphid Peewit (Wrong)

ENEMY YOU: *Stories Never Told*: CD

I had been waiting for this album since I caught wind that they had recorded it in 2002. Yet years and years passed and Panic Button never released it, as was the original plan. As rumors have it, Lookout (who runs Panic Button) had made some shady deal or another involving an Enemy You song being licensed to Disney for promotion on their *Boy in the Bubble* movie, and the band not only did not see any of that money, but that same money was never put into releasing their album, as one would assume it would. I don't know the whole story, and like I said, it's all rumors and hearsay, but in the end the band decided to take matters into their own hands and brought the album to see the light of day via a brand new label, Redscare Records. And I couldn't be happier. There is not one song on here I would fast forward through and it's all what I've come to expect from the band: amazing personal/political pop punk greatness. Highly recommended. —Mr. Z (Redscare)

EVENS, THE: *Self-titled*: CD
I'm not quite sure how it works, but Ian MacKaye is one of the few musicians I'm willing to follow virtually anywhere—this time, into a subdued duet with Amy Farina (the drummer for the Warners)—and be pleased by what I'd wouldn't traditionally give a

second listen. Perhaps it's the warmth of the songs. Perhaps there are more times in my life now where I'm looking for a little less chaos and a little more steeping time. Perhaps it's the chemistry of having not being steered wrong under Ian's musical auspices. Perhaps I'm a little more accepting of the idea that rage, although informative, can be less powerful than a whisper at the right time. It's a quiet, steady, giving album that would be hard pressed to be further way from the blast of the Teen Idles and Minor Threat... yet I'm grateful and happy that both exist. —Todd (Dischord)

EXPLOITED, THE: *Horror Epics*: CD

Oh, to be getting so old. The reissues keep coming out of the woodwork. My crusty friend Jim, who used to sing for the band Blown to Bits, loved this band. When he lived with me and my brother back in the mid-'80s, all he would play was the Exploited, UK Subs, or Chaos UK. In retaliation I would play Fuzzbox, Strawberry Switchblade, or Madonna all the time. Fuzzbox on a hangover can be quite annoying. I never did buy this record since Jim owned it and played it all too often. I believe it was released domestically on the metal label Combat. I thought I had no recollection of what this record sounded like. That was wrong. It was ingrained in the back of my brain. As soon as the opening chords of the title track came out of the speakers, I

remembered every note of this experimental, tribal number. As songs played, I remembered words and phrases of the songs throughout. I'm appreciative that this came my way. It brings back memories of time long past that will always be cherished. This is also a reminder that the Exploited put out good records in the past, compared to their latest output titled *Fuck the System*. That was a joke. —Donofthedeath (S.O.S.)

FAILURES UNION, THE: *You Know Who*: CD

Let me be straight with all of you. When I saw a CD from a three-piece from Buffalo, I was praying to God there was no Supertramp cover on it. Luckily my prayers were answered. This trio's debut was a wide smile surprise. Tight arrangements, nice harmonies and lyrics that may make you pause for a few moments of reflection. Remember when songs from Bob Mould, Evan Dando (at least before he started hittin' the pipe), or even Buffalo Tom made you stop and think? This is what *You Know Who* brings to mind. "I Feel the Same Songs about Her" sings about those dark nights we've probably all had—"that's all right/I can see your breath/'cuz we don't spring for heat." "You're the Coyote" chugs along with a chorus of "persistence is futile/I've learned that from you/the sheep run for shelter when you make the room," before kicking into a revved-up guitar solo. Out of

nowhere, a stellar debut that doesn't sound like Interpol. Hooray! —Sean Koeppenick (Art of the Underground)

FEELERS, THE/ BLANK ITS, THE: *Split*: 7"

Rad split featuring two bands that have generated quite a bit of a buzz in a very short amount of time. The Feelers have me kicking myself for not picking up their earlier 7". Fast, hard-hitting, guitar-driven punk that sounds like a lost early-'80s Midwest hardcore band. More evidence that Ohio is an often-overlooked hotbed of rock and roll. Folks who dig the first Baseball Furies album will find much to like here. Vocally, the Blank Its remind me of the guy from Servotron singing underwater. Musically, they play really twisted lo-fi stuff that's not exactly easy to categorize but would fit in between your A Frames and Spits records. Addictive hooks, too. Pick up a copy quick because these might not be around too long. —Josh (Contaminated)

FINAL SOLUTIONS: *Self-titled*: 7"

Call it caveman rock, where Oog get stick and bash, or call it Budget Rock, where it's heart over fidelity. Either way, it's so easy to like. Jay Reatard (Lost Sounds, Nervous Patterns, Destruction Unit, etc.) leads a first-rate charge in the spirit of the Urinals (think "Ack, Ack, Ack"). Tattered,

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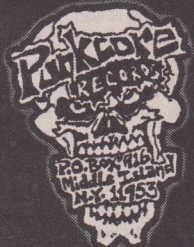
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catchy, and fun to flip over time and time again. Highly recommended. —Todd (Shit Sandwich)

FINGERS CUT MEGAMACHINE:

Self-titled: CD

I'm confused. They say they don't want to be grouped into the pseudo-folk revival, but are influenced by American folk from the '60s and the '70s. Wasn't that the folk revival? It's also described as punk. If anything it's folk rock, but it's mostly just pretty boring. Note: a purple-tinted picture of ducks on the cover is going to suck just as much as you would think it would. Surprise! —Megan (Thick)

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALES:

Self-titled: 7"

It's sort of strange that an all-girl, young band from Alabama reminds me of a death rock band from early '80s L.A., but they do. The Florence Nightingales owe quite a bit to 45 Grave, if they're aware of it or not, from the haunted vocals, the strong singing, the spooky subject matter (sleeping in spider beds and a song about a banshee), the sparse, mid-tempo arrangements, and dark, straight-ahead, playing-in-a-sarcophagus recording. Enjoyable. —Todd (Arkam)

FLUID OUNCES:

The Whole Shebang: CD

Here is a CD that I was ready to dis-

miss right off the bat since it was not punk. But it caught me by surprise because it touched my inner child. The music had that Queen meets Supertramp mixed with Electric Light Orchestra '70s vibe going for it. That takes me back to elementary school. That's a scary place to go. Now, if I had to wear the clothes from that period, that would be even worse. —Donofthedeat (Vacant Cage)

FREEVERSE:

Generator: CD

This is a three-piece, all-girl band from Seattle via Lawrence, Kansas. Musically, I'd say it's a mix of indie rock, heavy rock, and riot grrl stuff. Some songs don't work, but when they stick to the eclectic, quirky sound I like 'em more. Lyrically, they lean on topics of current American despair. I can relate. In the '90s bands like Smut, Morsel, Dogfaced Hermans, and Kicking Giant mixed up female vocals and similar genres a little. If I was rating this record, I'd say they have a six here. They're not your run of the mill formulaic band, but they're still not killing it yet. Maybe next time. —Buttertooth (Rodent Popsicle/Buttermilk)

FUCKED UP:

Dangerous Fumes: 7"

I think it's healthy thinking—really thinking—about rioting. And I'm not just talking about WTO rioting or Presidential Inauguration rioting. I'm talking about day-to-day rioting.

Shaving off the rot. Rearranging all the pieces in your head: work, life, food, sleep, fun. Putting a spark plug to the gasoline of your most combustible thoughts. Riot the fuck out of the next bowl of oatmeal you eat. Riot with kindness. Riot on your bed, when you're about to sleep. Yeah, it's sometimes dumb. Yeah, it's imperfect. But it's something, even with its flaws, to stave off complacency. For me, Fucked Up have provided a soundtrack of songs that make me want to not give in. I bought this 7" during their last tour. It's the *Baiting the Public 7"* completely repackaged (new song name, new acetate, new cover, new label that's glued over a 45 hole, the whole deal), but it's the same song with a little more guitar accompanying the horn at the very end. And because I think Fucked Up are a great band, I think it's funny instead of getting the slightest bit pissed that I just spent some money on a record I already own. I highly suggest finding bands that make you want to riot, to keep you on your toes. —Todd (Test Pattern, no address)

FUCKED UP: Generation: 7"

Fucked Up doesn't even sound like a band anymore. They sound like a groundswell, some force of nature that just blindsides you. There are a lot of good bands out there, but this is a great band, a band whose music creeps into your consciousness when you're doing whatever crap you do until you can't listen to anything else.

It's music that really makes you see things in a different light, like Dillinger Four or Pegboy. For all their talk about not being able to play their instruments, they're putting them to good use carving their name into music history. Seriously, everything this band has released is fucking unreal, and I can pretty much guarantee that you'll like it. —Josh (Slasher)

FUNERAL DRESS:

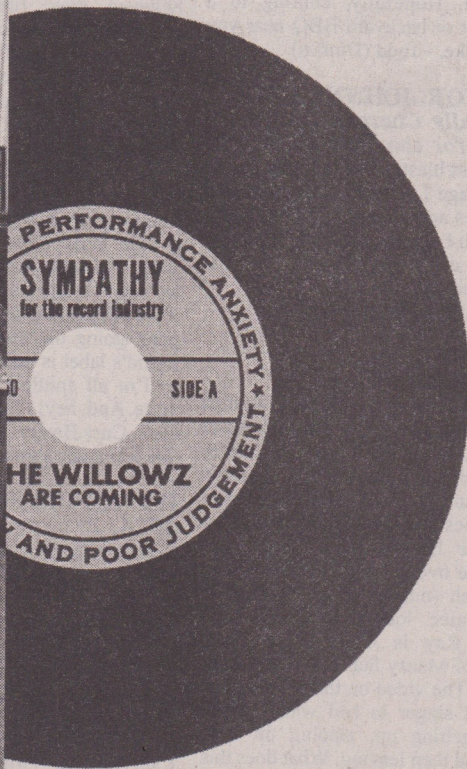
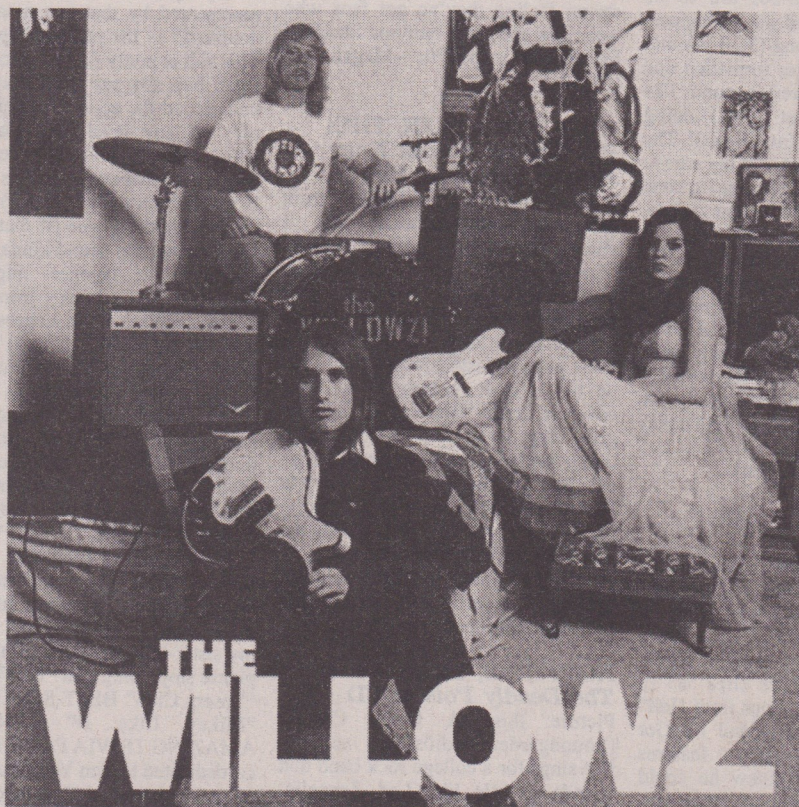
Come on Follow: CD

The fact that this band has eluded me since the mid-'80s is no surprise. To see that they have put a large batch of releases from that time to the present shows that punk is too big for one person to understand. So I have to go with what I know. I don't believe this band is from the UK but definitely not from the states. They play a strong brand of Britpunk and oi that is well studied and played with competence. The thing that puts this band ahead of the pack is their craft of melody that infects the music with the sense of fun. If I still drank at the pub, I would swing my pint of lager with a high salute. If I knew the lyrics like the back of my hand, I would be spitting out while I sang from the bottom of my gut. —Donofthedeat (S.O.S.)

FUNERAL DRESS:

Party Political Bullshit: CD

"Safety pins through my nose/smelly combats around my toes...." Dunno



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when, dunno where, but somehow garbage like this, which would've elicited open ridicule and probably more than one serious ass-beating for the band twenty years ago, has become the punk rock norm in certain dank corners. It would be one thing if they were some sort of parody band, like Anarchy 6 or Crucial Youth, but these guys, along with all the other parrot punk hordes, appear intent on being living stereotypes, all spikes and crazy color with absolutely no substance whatsoever. I usually don't get all "back in my day" about things, but bands like this make me so glad I grew up when I did 'cause the last thing I would've wanted as a kid was to be openly associated with people and bands so intent on flaunting such vapid stupidity and so hell-bent on being the equivalent of a conformist's Colorforms play set: all plastic and no depth whatsoever. —Jimmy Alvarado (SOS)

FURY OF A THOUSAND ZEUSES: **Habanero Enema: 7"**

The cover's drawn by someone of third-grade ability depicting Zeus (a bearded man holding a lightning bolt) giving an enema to another bearded man with really short arms. The music follows suit in an early Meatmen, covered-in-honey, standing-on-an-anthill spazzy way. It's endearing, much like how pre-first-album Descendents sounded, where it's too fast and abrasive to be considered poppy, but they're just too dorky to be considered hardcore. Hopefully, coming to a basement or backyard BBQ near you soon. I like. —Todd (Dinkus)

GAY FOR JOHNNY DEPT:
Erotically Charged Dance Songs for the Desperate: CD
Nine short blasts of skronk, not unlike yer average Locust record, minus the cool titles and wicked fast drumbeats. Although I dug the band name and the title, I can't say I was all that impressed with the music itself. —Jimmy Alvarado (Firefly)

GIANT DRAG:
Lemona: CDEP
What would love feel like if it hit me? Like a swift kick to my family jewels? Perhaps, but I don't get the answer from the first song on this record—"This Isn't It." This Hollywood duo sometimes sounds like Johnette from Concrete Blonde (cool), but other times the overdubbed choruses sound like Lush (not so cool). "YFLMD" has a nice lock-step groove and "Jonah Ray is AOkay" has trace effects of Mazzy Star but with louder guitars. The video on the CD features the lead singer in bed with random dudes getting up, zipping up their pants and then leaving. What does this mean? Oh well. Hard to make a definitive judgment from five songs but there are certainly other CDs I would grab first to use as a drink coaster. —Sean Koeppenick (Wichita)

GIBBONS, THE: **Hope Inc.: CD**

Fuck Yeah! These guys seem to be headed in the same direction that the Carrie Nations are, but via the Leatherface express. Very honest, very endearing tunes from three guys in Ferndale, MI. The feel of this record is oddly kinda summed up by the letter they included with the CD, written to us while "in class" by the guy that put it out. These kids are really putting their hearts into this and it shows. I bet they'd be great in a crowded basement on a summer night. —Ben Snakepit (Salinas)

GRUDGES, THE: **Self-titled: 7"**

Side A of this extra heavy (as in weight, not content) record has two songs done at breakneck speeds, reminiscent of extremely fast Minor Threat or Black Flag songs. Side B has slower, more mediocre punk. According to the insert, the record label made 109 pink, 110 blue, 99 lime, 221 heavy black vinyl, along with 25 alternate sleeves and 14 super secret special editions. This 7" isn't bad, but to me it's not groundbreaking enough to wow a record label into warranting the production of all of these different versions. Whatever floats your boat, I guess. —Mr. Z (Delta Pop Music)

HARPOON GUNS: **Wage War on the Whale Eaters: Cassette tape demo**

If a quartet of sub-20s are to be believed, these fired-up youngsters recorded this five song (3:38 minute) demo one month after formation and (I do not shit you here:) it sounds like the Teen Idles (not Idols) doing Battalion of Saints (not Pants)! The sounds sound like shit, but my ears—if not yours—learned long ago to cope with punk demo production values. The lyrics are kind of dumb, and I was a little disappointed to find out the song I thought went "Speed disease, let's go!" really goes "Speed disease, it kills!", but man they got some fierce punk going on, and apparently their friend's label is issuing a ten-song 7", so I'm all spittled up and ready for more. And, hey! I like Coke (not coke) too! —Cuss Baxter (harpoonguns@gmail.com)

HATED PRINCIPLES: **MTA: 7"**

Been a couple o' moons since Don's floated some new HP product this way, and it's always a treat when he does. As can be expected, this one's a gasser. Side one's a couple of potent doses of L.A. hardcore circa '83 (a different version of "Cops from Hell" was featured on the second *We Got Power* comp), and side two features Katz warblin' (who knew he could sing???) on a mid-tempo, latter-day-White-Flagish punker tune, and a short thrasher about L.A.'s public transit system. Some good shit here, kids, the kind that can only come outta

people who've been hangin' around the block more than a few years. —Jimmy Alvarado (Gothic Gospel)

HAVOC, THE: **Road Warrior: CDEP**

While this record may be a bit contrived and even a bit clichéd at times (tunes about hard life, burning stuff down, and self-indulgent angst), what this record may lack in originality it more than makes up for in spirit. It's kind of like throwing cans of beer at busses and parking meter checkers while careening downtown at ninety miles per hour in a '69 Mustang GT—it's been done before, but it's still fun and demands notice. With three studio tracks, including a Partisans cover, and three live tracks, it's a nifty little package that makes want to wreck stuff with glee. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Punk Core)

HOLLOW POINTS: **Annihilation: CDEP**

Very solid debut by these street punks from Seattle. A teaser at only five songs, but more than enough to get your blood pumping. I now find myself waiting impatiently for their full-length due out in February on Disaster. —Toby (Dirtnap)

HOLY GHOST, THE: **Welcome to Ignore Us: CD**

Rolling Stone says it "evokes a Tarantino-esque landscape populated by Yakuza and CIA." I couldn't agree more if I knew how in the hell that relates to music. Let's just say I have a strong feeling they've got fans who wear ties and have haircuts like Rod Stewart had in the '70s. —Megan (Clearly)

HOLY MOUNTAIN, THE: **Bloodstains Across Your Face in Decline...: CD**

This is one of the dudes from Combatwoundedveteran, who I always liked but they seemed to kinda pigeonhole themselves. This new band is way more diverse. It's great hardcore that draws from a lot of stuff: there's some d-beat, some thrash, some gnarly blastbeats and even a little bit of dark melody to it. Their cover of Crass' "Big Hands" is really good. They do an excellent job of capturing the feel of what made the original good, and then take it up a notch to fit well with the rest of the songs on the record. If you're into stuff like the Sainte Catharines, you'll dig the Holy Mountain. I wish No Idea would put out more records like this. —Ben Snakepit (No Idea)

HOTPIPPES, THE:
The Deadly Poison: CD
Picture this. A Chris Cornell (Soundgarden/Audioslave) sound-alike sings for a college rock band that sounds a little like Led Zeppelin. Woohoo! Find it now in a used bin near you! —Donofthedeath (Vacant Cage)

I: The Nominonivore: CD
A very commercial sounding alt-rock album, recorded on Pro Tools. Should garner them much attention and inevitable fame if they know how to play the game. I (meaning me, not the band), however, will never listen to this again, 'cause intentionally mainstream tripe like this just makes my flesh do the boogaloo. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sling Slang)

IF MAN IS FIVE: **Blood Is the Ink, Hate Is the Story: CD**

A sonically schizophrenic hodge-podge of metal, punk, faux-goth and arty tinges, the result of which, while not particularly enthralling, was well executed. The singer has a nice voice. I honestly don't mean to diss them, but they sound like so many gloomy "alternative metal" bands that populated the Sunset Strip clubs in the '90s. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.blackazul.com)

INSAINTS, THE: **Sins of Saints: CD**

The only things I really remember about the Insaints from back when was that they did a record with the Diesel Queens (turns out to be the only record they made), the singer was Tim Yohannan's girlfriend, and something about a stage show involving lesbians, urine, and a banana (*Stop! You had me at "urine!"*). That said, in the cold hard light of 21st Century retrospection, I am shocked, grossed and mildly agog that this band was only represented by that one measly split double-45 in the product-happy '90s: This shit is pretty fuckin' good. While I can honestly say that I have never understood the appeal of pierced nipples on any level, and that music which accompanies a noteworthy confrontational stage show is generally either funny once (if that) or abrasive-and-nothing-else (if that), to say that the Insaints sound kinda like one imagines the Avengers might have sounded like were they fronted by a dominatrix (but not in a cheesy way—in, like, a FOR REAL way) is not an untoward stretch of the imagination by any means. A few tracks here and there might bring glimpses of Lunachicksville to mind, but, all told, this stuff has got WAY more in common with the classical model of female-fronted West Coast punk bands (Avengers, UXA, VKTMS, DOA—er, never mind that last one) than I would have ever suspected. Singer Marian Anderson's fatal OD in 2001 seems as wasteful and stupid as my sister-in-law's SUV. Could people please stop doing that? **BEST SONG:** "Losers Club" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Mikey Like It" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Record is co-dedicated to Tim Yohannan, whose name is misspelled "Yahannon" twice herein, which is interesting because 1. In Bob Dylan's book *Chronicles: Volume One*, he misspells the Minneapolis street name "Hennepin"

as "Hinnepen"—reversing the position of the first and last vowel just as was done with "Yahannon;" and 2. The reason why i am highly sensitized to the spelling of Tim's last name is because i still have the yellow Post-It™ he sent me stating "If you're gonna bitch slap me, at least spell my name right! It's YOHAN-NAN!" —Rev. Nørb (Disaster)

J CHURCH: Seishun Zankoku Monogatari: CD

This is the San Francisco trio's second Japan-only release. The title roughly translates to *Cruel Story of Youth*. Half of the songs are covers and half are originals that veer all over the map stylistically but somehow hold together. "Who Killed Pasolini?" laments the loss of the important Italian writer/poet—"Who took Pasolini's life/a prostitute of the extremist right?/why has no one cared enough to take his spirit's fight?" "Near 600 Pages" is another literary discussion that goes beyond your basic freshman English class concerns. The covers range from The Cars to Richard Hell. The Fall's "Psycho Mafia" seems to be stuck in my skull the most. Cool guitar riffage and heartfelt vocals make this one to seek out—or even order as a pricey import. Makes me want to find out more about this band that has been deserving increased attention for far too long. —Sean Koepenick (Snuffy Smile)

JELLO BIAFRA WITH THE MELVINS: Never Breathe What You Can't See: CD

As far as I'm concerned, this CD blows all of Jello's spoken word albums, Lard, Jello with DOA, Jello with Mojo Nixon, and the No WTO Combo OUT OF THE FUCKING WATER. This is the best Jello material since the *Bedtime for Democracy* LP was released. My goodness, if "Islamic Bomb" isn't the song of the year, I don't know what is. The Melvins rock out eight tunes of punk/metal mayhem like it's no one's business and Jello gets right to the point of his annoyances with the world. Oh yeah, and it looks like gang vocals include the talents of Jesse Luscious, Johnny Fleshies, Wendy-O-Matik, and John the Baker among others. Great artwork, great music, and great lyrics: what more could you want from a perfect record? —Mr. Z (Alternative Tentacles)

KADDISFLX: Buy Our Intention; We'll Buy You a Unicorn: CD

Christian rock without the distraction of a deity, which is surprising due to their God-awfulness. —Megan (Hopeless)

KASH: Beauty Is Everywhere/KASH: CD

Pure unadulterated garbage. Fake

posturing, songs that go nowhere, and the worst Smiths cover I've ever heard in my life. I'm still in shock that Steve Albini recorded this complete train wreck of a release. This has nothing to do with the fact that most of the songs are sung in Italian—KASH is completely bankrupt of any actual talent. Only purchase if having your wisdom teeth pulled with no drugs is your idea of a good time, 'cos this feels pretty much the same. —Sean Koepenick (Sickroom)

KERBLOKI: Poisonous Plants: CD

Pleasant enough hip hop that flows quite nicely but doesn't appear all that deep. —Jimmy Alvarado (Lucid)

KERMIT'S FINGER: Shoot Yourself in the Foot: CD

Been a long while since I heard something from these guys, but it seems they're still peddlin' their wares in the guise of hardcore with intelligently stupid lyrics. Sandwiched in between love songs to nicotine, praises for Pedro Martinez, and odes to beer drinkin' are sly attacks on American consumer mentality, the current denizens of the White House, asshole cops, and history's perception of George Washington. If you're lookin' for high-tech musical noodling and big tough metal dudes with tattoos and no hair that take themselves way too seriously, look elsewhere. If you're

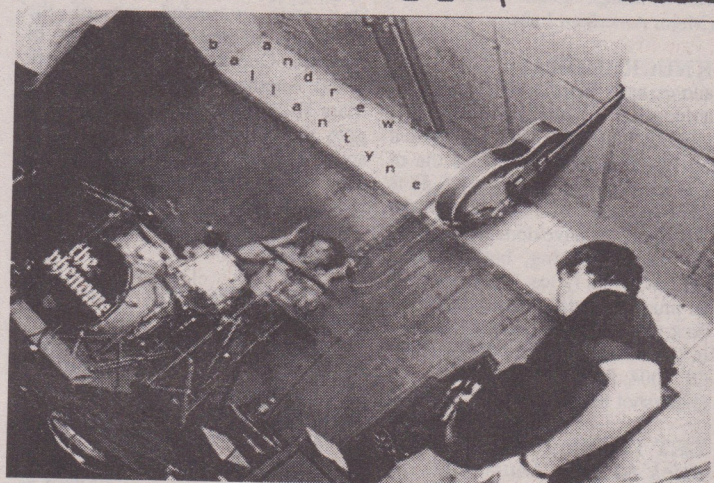
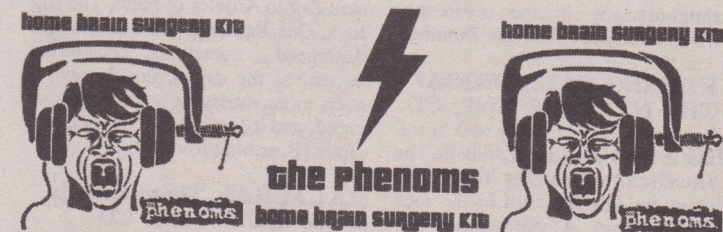
look for some straight-ahead hardcore that doesn't fit into some sub-pigeonhole with a name a butcher might use in everyday conversation and that doesn't mind consciously veering toward the dumb on occasion, look no further. Me, I still fuckin' dig 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.kermitsfinger.net)

KERMIT'S FINGER: Shoot Yourself in the Foot: CD

This is pretty good. Straight-forward, simple punk rock that at times reminds me of Scared of Chaka, but with El Duce or somebody singing. Honestly, that's the only part of this record I wasn't really stoked on: the vocals. They're just a little too goofy Meatmen-style for me. The lyrics aren't bad; I've always had a special place in my heart for bands that sing about smoking cigarettes. It's not a bad record at all, and I bet these guys would be fun to hang out with. —Ben Snakepit (Poorest Quality)

KEVIN K: Mr. Bones: CD

If you look like a forty-something junkie, it might not be the best idea to put a picture of yourself on the cover of something you're trying to sell. Or to have a song called "Crackhouse," where they actually spell out, "C-R-A-C-K-H-O-U-S-E." Also, in "Crackhouse," they refer to a girl who always likes to party and always has a syringe. Now, I'm no crack-ass crackhead, but I always thought



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crack was smoked. Please, just stop.
—Megan (Realkat, no address given)

KILL YOUR IDOLS: From Companionship to Competition: CD

I was really anticipating that I was really going to like this one. I'm not completely disappointed, but I did put this on a higher pedestal. First off, the production was a bit off in my book. The vocals are really dry and pulled a hair back in the mix. The guitars are a bit too clean and could have used a deeper sound. The bass sounds good but is a little too forward in the mix. The drums are the only thing that is mixed in the right place. I can hear the structure of the music being powerful but the mix destroys what could be amazing. I would have liked maybe a little more variety in the chord structures too. Maybe they are leaning too heavily on reliving that '88 sound played by guys from the '90s. The hardcore is competent but at times sounds generic. Too much repetition and too much paint-by-numbers. The lyrics also rubbed me a little wrong. It was a bit elitist in nature, like na na na na na, I'm better than you. It's a problem in modern day hardcore which shows that sometimes it can lack originality. The macho attitude is what many of us old crabs ran away from when we got into punk. The music is just rubbing me the wrong way like athlete's foot with scabs. Music for the toughest guy in the mosh pit.
—Donofthedeat (Side One Dummy)

Tragedy rip off bands. This will be much more tolerable." Unfortunately, that was just the first song. Within about four more tracks, the songs got less and less aggro and more like a football player trying to take my lunch money. By the end of it, I was ready to get a note excusing me from gym class. At least this band picked a fitting name. —Ben Snakepit (Spook City)

LORRAINAS, THE: Fast Kitties: CD

Why do women think they have to fit themselves into this crap? "She took the anger in her heart and took it out on her hair;" "Take me home and rip my clothes off;" and "You can't find love in a peroxide bottle." Like hi! I totally have no substance! I'm embarrassed for them. —Megan
(www.thelorrainas.com)

LOWCLOUDCOVER: ...I Took a Second Too Long: CD

Here's my bet: these folks love, love, love later Fugazi (or a band influenced by them) and the Cure. Nothing wrong with that, but I kept on waiting for the zag to zig. It's like a solitary path through high weeds: no matter how many twist and turns, the path's really obvious because it's already been hacked out. The result is, unfortunately, a boring record. My other bet: these are some very earnest folks making this music, so there's no need to cudgel them. Here's my advice: find the zag, something far away. Something that may not fit at first, then make it your own. Zag to Articles of Faith, The Big Boys, Otis Redding, The Minutemen, Motörhead... something, because at the end of the day, I already own a much more satisfying version of this record, and it's called *Red Medicine*.
—Todd (Breathing Room)

KILLING CALIFORNIA/ THE NEEDLES: Split: CD

Killing California: Dirty rock'n'roll like the bars you like to drink in. The Needles: Two notches better and more melodic, but still in the rock vein of things. —Donofthedeat
(Major Amerikan Label)

KNUCKLEHEAD: Cosmetic Youth: 7"

This slab o' vinyl is GREAT, GREAT, GREAT! Side A sounds a bit like the Business, minus the oi and add some more rockin'. Side B reminds me of something the 101'ers could have done. Not only is the music amazing, but the band gets an A+ on lyrics. If you love 7" as much as I do, please, please go pick this up. You will thank me for it. I've cast my vote for the BEST 7" OF 2004, for sure! —Mr. Z
(Longshot Music)

LET IT DIE:

Stick to Your Guns: CD

I picked this up and looked at the cover and groaned. "Oh this looks like it's gonna be some lame jock-metal hardcore." But I put it on anyway because I had to, and then I was pleasantly surprised by the first song. "Oh cool, it's not so much straightedge-type jock metal. It's more like one of those clean-cut, nice-smelling, watered-down

MALACHAI: These Sounds of the Spirit World: CD

One song reminded me of the Presidents of the United States of America. One had a '80s Krautrock sound. Another was more punk meets Mars Volta sound going. And another goes more towards a pop punk '77 style. That was the first four songs. This release goes out in many directions. I could have gone without the white boy rap. —Donofthedeat
(4XBeaver)

MANHANDLERS, THE: Self-titled: LP

It's amazing what mastering will do. I wasn't so up on the CD version of this album, thinking it sounded too much the same. The vinyl makes it an almost completely different album. It's nasty, fishnet-ripping, cough syrup and vodka chugging, porno warehouse as practice space good times. Think if the Runaways got of age after making a series of poor life decisions, funneled that rage and confusion into a tight ball, and tore right back at it by making music. The result is sexy, angry, gritty, and unapologetic: in other words, a great punk record. —Todd
(Criminal I.Q.)

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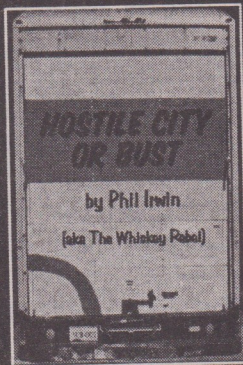
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MANIKIN: M4: 7"

I keep on thinking they're writing me songs on a postcard from the out-reaches of Siberia. Cold, tattered art rock, that although infused with an Eastern Bloc solemnity, is engaging and slightly hypnotic, like watching the wheels of a train when it's speeding up and clanging along. So, not cock rock or smash-you-in-the-face rock, but more Pere Ubu and Wire: it's primarily about weight and atmosphere, but with scraping hooks and definite momentum. Could have easily come out in the late '70s England or Cleveland instead of Austin 2005. Satisfying stuff. -Todd (Super Secret)

MATICS, THE: Self-titled: CDEP

First release since 2001's *Ignition* shows the band updating their sound with a new drummer and songs that thrash around like a caged animal being tortured with a stun gun. "343" features dueling guitars while "Symptoms in Tread" recalls the best that Fugazi had to offer. My favorite track on this platter is "The Last Swashbuckler" which sports precision batterings from drummer Ronnie DiCola that may cause your ears to bleed. That's certainly my idea of a good time. Pat K. and Jim Mertz trade off on both guitars and vocals and their tight interplay provides solid cohesion to their sound. According to the liner notes, this was recorded in an

oil factory outside Chicago. I can practically smell the grime oozing through the speakers on this one. This CD wraps up with a live song, "I Sacrifice I," which showcases throbbing bass chunks that Pierre Kezdy would be proud of. Pick this one up and play it really loud in your basement. It will hold any loose foundations in place. -Sean Koepenick (World Records)

MHz:

Increase the Voltage: CD

From what I gather, these are the complete recordings of this band. Not sure why it took so long to get released or why they only put out a 7" while they were a band, because this is pretty damn great. It finds a nice middle ground between the Tyrades and the Baseball Furies, which is a pretty nice place to be. There's also a weird computer theme going on, like Servotron, but not as funny. Where was I when they were around? -Josh (Flying Bomb)

MIDDLE CLASS MILE: Self-titled: CD

Liberal doses of pop and emo are fused to a punk fuselage. While their efforts will no doubt garner them a record deal, they didn't sound all that different from all the other "new school" bands playing in the same sandbox. -Jimmy Alvarado (Two Four Dead)

MIDNIGHT LASERBEAM: *A Death in the Discotheque: CD*

At some point I fell asleep while listening to this but I think I remember it being sort of a collection of mushy atmospheric lullabies that sound a bit like the Cure crossed with the Afghan Whigs crossed with a warm bottle of Enfamil baby formula. It just oozes from the speakers like creamy spit-up from the gaping mouth of a giant baby a-snooze and dreaming fitfully of being tangled up in Robert Smith's octopus hairdo. While beating this thing to death with a garden weasel certainly sounds satisfying, it would ultimately be something akin to attacking a big soggy saltine cracker. Frightfully uninteresting. -Aphid Peewit (Mattress)

MILLION DOLLAR MARXISTS:

Give It a Name: CD

Another band strip-mines the same "garage rock" territory as the Hives and a million others. Catchy tunes, I'll give 'em that. -Jimmy Alvarado (Gearhead)

MISERY/ PATH OF DESTRUCTION: Split: CD

Misery sounds like a punk band trying to outdo Swedish metal. Sorry guys, the Swedes have it down pat. Path of Destruction is more of the same only a

little less punky. They have a song talking shit on Bush, so at least they got their head on the right way. -Mr. Z (Rodent Popsicle)

MOMMY AND DADDY: *Fighting Style Killer Panda: CD*

Dual girl/boy vocals snarling over an awesome sounding fuzz bass and synth, but desperately trying run away from the annoying and monotonous drum machine. -Kat Jetson (Kanine)

MOREX OPTIMO: *Beast of Reflection: CD*

A wickedly vomitous example of what happens when some wretched weanlings mix art and algebra and try to pass it off as music. At its best it sounded a little like Jethro Tull at their turgid, pretentious worst. Absolute rot. What did I ever do to deserve having to listen to this? If this is "punk," can *Razorcake* stop being a punk zine? Please? -Aphid Peewit (Broken Hill)

NARCOLEPTIC YOUTH: *Chronological Disorder: CD*

Holy moley, the kids are all right... at first I swore that this was a re-issue of some band from the early '80s that somehow I had never heard of. It's fast and biting, with a snotty sense of humor and tunes that, instead of getting old, get better with every listen (even if some of the riffs are markedly similar to riffs that I have on other records, but when you're working

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with only four or five chords, tops, you'll wind up covering some old ground: cf. Big Drill Car's almost note-for-note reworking of a Brigade song on *Album Type Thing*). The titles may have made me groan at first ("Vicious Killer," "Don't Belong," "My Neighbor Hates Me," "McAnarchy," et al.) and wonder what kind of rehashed crap-trap I had found myself in, but dang it all if they didn't pull it off. This certainly isn't the record of the year, but I doff my cap to Narcoleptic Youth for making me feel fifteen again. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Finger)

NAZ NOMAD & THE NIGHTMARES: *Give Daddy the Knife Cindy*: CD

I was unemployed for most of the summer of 1987, and, to give myself some illusion of productivity, I started off every morning (okay, afternoon) by sending an anonymous post card signed with the obvious pseudonym "Jesus Chrysler" (note: this affectation preceded both the band of that name and the song "Jesus Chrysler Drives a Dodge" by the Screaming Blue Messiahs) to my friend Donny who was stationed in Japan. The only actual message I still remember from any of the cards I sent him (which were, as often as not, just weird scrawls and chicken scratching) was something to the effect of "HeY dONnY i bEt yOu DON't KNow tHaT NAZ nOmAd & tHe NiGhtMaReS aRe reALLY tHe

DAMNeD!", which amused, puzzled, and bewildered him even after he got out of the Navy™. In retrospect, how ANYBODY could have listened to this record back then and NOT immediately pegged it as the Damned by the time "Action Woman" rolled around is beyond me, but, nope, most joes were well and truly of the opinion that Naz Nomad and Sphinx Svenson were real people (who weren't other real people with funny names most of the time), that this really was the soundtrack to a movie called *Give Daddy the Knife Cindy* that no one had ever heard of before or since, and that American Screen Destiny pictures would one day surely grace us with this sure-fire box office smash in full Psychedelic Color, as advertised (starring Eddy Taylor and Shelley DuMaurier, don'tcha know). Oh well, people are weird that way. In any event, this album was always real cool to have at parties—if half the people wanted to hear something at least vaguely tied to punk rock ("vaguely tied to punk rock" about as generous a label as one'd slap on the Damned ca. this album's original release in 1984) and the other half wanted to hear some sort of '60s punk-psych-garage thing, you could flip this on and be hailed as The Great Uniter; plus, back when it came out, I wasn't all that familiar/saturated with songs like "Action Woman" and "She Lied" and "I Can't Stand This Love, Goodbye," so it came in handy as a *de facto*

Nuggets/Pebbles type thing as well. From a Damned standpoint, this record is certainly WAY the fuck better than their "real" sixth album (I maintain that every album up through *Strawberries*, their fifth, is worth owning), and, compared to *Acid Eaters*, the Ramones' lame attempt at doing the same sort of record years later, *Give Daddy the Knife Cindy* is King of the Jelly Jungle times ten. From a standpoint of how essential a record featuring a '77 punk band ('76, whatever) doing cover songs from 1967 in 1984 is in 2005, if you can cope with a little of that thin, overcompressed '80s sound, and the whole bouncing around thing from the '70s to the '80s to the '60s to the '00s doesn't swat you as sure to produce some horribly ersatz result, I say tune in, turn on, and blow your tweeter, dude. BEST SONG: I'll say the one original, "(Do You Know) I Know." BEST SONG TITLE: "I Can't Stand This Love, Goodbye" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I obtained my vinyl copy of this in the '90s when Timbo from Mutant Pop™ decided he could no longer stand this record, goodbye, and gave it to me. Sweet. —Rev. Nørð (Dionysus)

NEW MEXICAN DISASTER SQUAD/ WESTERN ADDICTION: Split: CDEP

Each band provides three originals and one cover. NMDS: Melodically

infused hardcore punk that is not afraid to push the limits of speed and anger. No cookie cutter song structures. They made me keep my attention. Reminded me of a cross of Avail meets Strike Anywhere. The cover of the Bad Brains' "FVK" was pretty damn fine in my book. Western Addition: They hold their own with their brand of punk that was equal parts Good Riddance mixed with some Minor Threat conviction. I don't think I have heard someone cover Naked Raygun's "Rat Patrol" before. A release worthy of keeping. —Donofthedeat (No Idea)

NONE MORE BLACK:

Loud about Loathing: CDEP

I tried to check this band out. I've heard good things. It's way too poppy for me, though. They attempt some edgy stuff, but Alkaline Trio did it a lot better. I guess they could fit with a kid who likes the new Hot Water Music, but I like the old HWM. No, even that's giving these cats a little too much street cred. They do play Pork Pie drums, use Pro-Mark sticks, and ESP bass guitars, among other things. I always thought it was a little wanky to write that shit in a CD. Gotta please the sponsors, guys. Punk rock. Dude. Their retort in a song here is "I don't give a shit what punk has to say anymore, man, 'Shit has changed,' no kidding, there's no more room for me," and then it ends the whining rant with, "There's no point. The subversive's been dug up. All the

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ideas that were dead." Did Donald Rumsfeld write this gibberish? I have no idea what the hell they mean, either. —Buttertooth (Sabot Productions)

NRA: Machine: CD

I've heard of these guys for quite some time but, if memory serves, haven't actually heard 'em. They dabble in a poppy, rock form of punk (meaning the songs are mid-tempo and the screaming is kept to a minimum) that's often reminiscent of Naked Raygun and similar bands. While they approach their tunes in a straightforward manner, there are some neat little surprises to keep things interesting. —Jimmy Alvarado (Gearhead)

OBSERVERS, THE:

So What's Left Now?: CD

Ho-ly go-d-dam-ned sh-it, this record's fantastic. It's denatured, so many of its elements are intentionally off-kilter, which may throw you off on first listen, but stick it out. The reward may just be your new favorite punk band. The singer's got a mid-paced, almost operatic voice, which makes the vocals sound like a politically informed Damned. But they don't take the easy cookie cutter route, because the overall effect is a new DIY band stepping on the toes of giants and getting away with it. The bass is thick and slabby without being fret-tastic wankery. The drums are slaps, punches, and tough love. The guitar is Dangerhouse's barbed wire pulled tight, keeping the compound well protected; the band takes no easy outs. The lyrics are heartbreaking, expansive, and generous, focusing on promises upkept and decay seeping in. If some asshole's shitting in your ear that all punk's on a big stage and sounds like taffy coming out of some boy band factory, here is, yet again, proof positive that they have no idea what the fuck they're talking about. Dig. A diamond. —Todd (Vinyl Warning)

OKAY PADDY:

Hunk: CDEP

This reminds me a jangler version of The Outfield or a weaker version of Jimmy Eat World. Neither of those references is bad, per se, but I just need more "oomph" to keep this one in my collection because by the last song (and this is only an EP, mind you,) I said out loud to myself, "Please stop," as I reached for the eject button. Still, it's always nice to get an extra jewel case out of these things... —Kat Jetson (Prison Jazz)

OUIPOSITOR:

Cease the Day: CD

Bony and discordant and yet as loose as the swinging flesh on the

back of my grandma's arms. I'd maybe compare this to Syd Barrett but this has an irksome self-consciousness that Mr. Barrett's organic strangeness never allowed him to have. And no amount of dissonant guitar and experimental plumbing sounds can cover it up. Cool screen-printed cover, though. —Aphid Peewit (Ovipositor)

PHENOMS, THE: Home Brain Surgery Kit: CD-R

So many bands are afraid of The Rock. They won't let it be just that simple. There has to be some sort of outside influence. Then there are the traditionalists, those who make no apologies for walking a well-tread path, but with their own defined steps. This is where The Phenoms come in. Straight-forward, no frills rock-'n'roll. No apology, and no reason for one. It's just plain old rock-'n'roll, but they make every song their own, and they do it well, which is why they have chances to share the stage with bands ranging from Pegboy, The New Bomb Turks, and Guitar Wolf to Link Wray. —Megan (Beercan)

PILOT SCOTT TRACY: Any City: CD

Sporadic new wave punk—what you've come to expect from the Causey Way outfit (some of the members who make up this new band). Elements of mellow electro, new wave, punk and straight-up pop flavor this disc, and in a good way. "Big Fun" (showcasing quality post-punk) and "Master Jack" (pure pop goodness) are the best tracks by far. Songs like "Daisies" and "Babies" sound less like the Causey Way and more like Le Tigre or Ladytron. All in all, this is a great disc for past cult members of the Causey Way and indie/electro post-punk fans. —Mr. Z (Alternative Tentacles)

PILOT SCOTT TRACY: Any City: CD

The Causey Way (*Razorcake* #1) cult disbanded. But the musical platelets remained in their blood. In that blood, The Cars splashed through and slithering keyboards hydroplaned. In that blood, early '60s pop commingled with sparse, non-sucky indie rock. In that blood, guitars blare and Scott sings in his high-register voice, and sexy, sultry interludes remain. PST are less new wave and more just a band whose approach is akin to latter-day Man... or AstroMan? I'm willing to go the distance—far from the original flight pattern—because there's always an unexpected reward if you buckle yourself in and take the turbulence. "Angel of Death" balls up every word in this review, lights them on fire, and uses them

as a beacon for a safe landing. Recommended listening. —Todd (Alternative Tentacles)

PONIES: Self-titled: CD

(Make note, this isn't The Ponys.) Spazzy DIY rock in the musical-notes-instead-of-rocks cement mixer of The Okmoniks, ADD/C, The Lipstick Pickups, Los Federales, and The Leeches, augmented by altitude sickness (they're from Flagstaff) and screams into your left ear. At times, it's endearing. At other times, it's like getting a tamale and you unwrap the husk to find another husk. It's annoying, but you can work through that, too, unpeel it again, and it's nice and warm and soft inside with just a little bit of chicken knuckle you'll have to spit out into a napkin. I've got the feeling they're on to something, and haven't quite figured out how their Optimus Prime should be assembled for maximum ass kicking, but am willing to double check how their creative underwear fill up for the next release. —Todd (DogPony)

PROZACS, THE: Self-titled: CD

"She needs a facelift and she needs one now/she needs to alter her looks somehow...." Are you kiddin' me with this? Look, the Queens-clone school of stupidity became passé more than eight years ago. Please find another band to emulate. I recommend some emo group that's hot right now. Now there's a genre that should provide gobs of fodder for flaunting such an utter lack of originality. —Jimmy Alvarado (Cheapskate)

RAN: John Says: 7"

There was a time early on with Down By Law where I'd given a lot of faith to them. It's too bad that they became a band who went on to shit the bed over and over again—musically and as people—so much so, I find it hard to listen to songs that I once swore an allegiance to. Ran resurrect some of those early feelings I had for DBL: earnest singing, urgent playing, a watershed of familiar sounds somehow re-energized with interesting cuts and twists of their own. Think of early Dag Nasty and *Double Image*-era Marginal Man. Right about there. Not quite as good, but not bad at all. —Todd (Snuffly Smile)

REATARDS, THE:

Monster Child: 7"

I'm continually amazed at how well the sound of teenagers falling on their instruments has translated to tape. —Josh (Zaxxon Virile Action)

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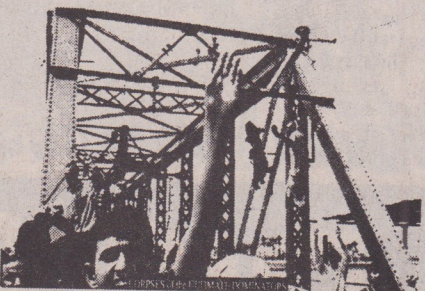
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RESONANCE: Self Titled: CD-R EP

When I first picked this outta the stack, I had to scratch my head. Is this a DVD? No, it's a CD packaged in a DVD case. Must have been a Crazy Eddie sale at Blockbuster. But the songs are what matter. This five-piece outfit of young upstarts fry up some nice dual guitar riffs and drums that will have you reaching for the Advil—but with a smile. "Auctionary Blindness" has the singer thrashing against art and its commercialism—"here's another one to hang in your gallery of dead-skin masterpieces." "450Volts" surges forward with lines like, "We send volts through the weapons in our wallets that are soaked in the blood of workers a world away." If you ever liked Embrace or Rites of Spring pick this up—there's something here for you. Resonance puts their fists through YMCA basement ceilings so you don't have to. Solid first release from this Richmond outfit. —Sean Koeppenick (Self-released)

RETCHING RED: Get Your Wings: CD

If you have ever put in any time reviewing records and CDs, it can be very trying. After so many years, the act of getting my fat ass in the chair to sit in front of the computer can take days of procrastination. So far, one CD out six, I have liked. I reach into the bag to keep the process going. I put this release into the CD player and my head swings around in an act of whiplash. What is coming out of my speakers? The speed factor is up there, the anger is registering in the red, and it doesn't sound like a sloppy mess. Most songs clock in at under two minutes. I have noticed on the net that this band has had shows with Oppressed Logic, Channel 3, and Dinah Cancer & the Grave Robbers up in Nor Cal. Using female-led bands as reference, the vocalist has characteristics that remind me of Cinder from Tilt (it turns out that it is her), but the music is much faster and aggressive than the mentioned band. You could say that they sound like All or Nothing HC or Naked Aggression but the production is much better and the speed factor takes into account. The cover of "Insomnia" by Aggression almost doesn't sound like a cover. They sped that song up and made it their own. I have listened to this on more than one occasion. As cliched as this sounds, this is a kick ass CD! —Donofthedeat (Bleeding Bitch)

ROGER MIRET AND THE DISASTERS: 1984: CD

Agnostic Front is way better. Roger Miret is playing streetpunk oi now. He should have stuck with hardcore. I threw this in and immediately put on my Agnostic Front record *Victim in Pain* instead. What happened,

man? Get old? Did Hellcat tell you to try to be Rancid? Song titles like "Loud and Proud," "Riot, Riot, Riot," and "The Boys" try to grasp hard at the unity message to oi hooligans wannabes in the suburbs. Then there's the song "Street Rock n Roll." Can you be any more generic for us? Boring. Has he turned into a Spinal Tap parody? The vocals sound like it. He sings, "I don't like you, I hate you, fuck off." Roger Miret never played ska, but he decided it's cool to rip lines from second wavers anyway with this line, "These boots are made for stomping, gonna stomp all over you." What a dipshit. —Buttertooth (Hellcat)

ROSE TATTOO: Rock'n'Roll Outlaws: CD ROSE TATTOO: Assault & Battery: CD ROSE TATTOO: Scarred for Life: CD ROSE TATTOO: Southern Stars: CD

It's funny how even some of the greatest stuff can fall through the cracks, you know? I remember seeing *Rock'n'Roll Outlaws*, what I now know is their debut album, in a long-gone record store back in '82 or so, being intrigued by their bald singer, and then putting it back on the shelves 'cause the band name was too wimpy. Now that I finally get to hear what was on that album, not to mention the four that followed it, I realize I should've taken that puppy home with me. Rose Tattoo's debut is surely the missing link between punk and bar rock—part Ramones, part AC/DC and maybe a dash of a pissed-off Faces-era Rod Stewart in the vocals—and one of the finest albums to come out of the late '70s. This was one of those rare bands that managed to wrestle rock back from the overpaid pretty boys and give it back to the streets, a band that you'd best believe meant it when they sang "Nice boys don't play rock 'n' roll" and drove the point home by adding "I'm not a nice boy." This is the soundtrack for an ass-kicking both metaphorical and literal. This is what rock'n'roll was born to do, namely scare the shit outta you while getting you to move a little. The band followed up their stunner of a debut with *Assault & Battery*, which, while not as intense as its predecessor, packs a mean wallop behind another strong set of songs. From there on in, as with so many other bands, it's downhill, with each of the last two albums losing even more of that crucial raw edge and sliding ever closer into bad '80s rock land, although, to their credit, they're even good at that. Captain Oi has seen fit to reissue all four of the band's albums with extensive liner notes and the requisite bonus tracks. Much thanks is due to the Captain for giving me a new favorite band of the week, even if it took me twenty-two years to pay attention. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

ROSETTA WEST:**X Descendant: CD**

This is neither savage nor psychedelic, just miserably uninteresting. I've heard crappy high school cover bands that rock harder. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alive)

RPG: Fulltime: CD

I got a little bored during the first song and said to myself, "I think I should floss my teeth." Lucky for me, I had put the CD in my portable player. So, I walked to the bathroom and grabbed the floss. Then I walked back to my desk and sat down and started to floss. I appreciated its minty aftertaste. I walked back to the bathroom and put the floss box back, but kept flossing. Feeling much fresher, I threw out the floss. By the time I looked down, I was on track six. That's how interesting this is. —Megan (Arclight)

RUSHMORES, THE:**Giggidagiggidagiggida!: CDEP**

How many Ramones-influenced pop punk bands are there? I know, I know. But, how many of them do you actually find listening to over and over again? Yes, this is covered ground, but it's worth a listen or twenty. The main vocals are damn near perfect for the style—not even a hint of the whine that a lot of pop punk bands seem to think works. Everything is pulled together tightly. The vocal har-

monies are incorporated into the songs in a manner not overly bubblegum-ish. Plus, the last of four songs is *We're from Haddonfield*, and horror movie references are one of the many paths into my musical heart. —Megan (Punkhead)

S'COOL GIRLS:**The S'cool Girls EP: CDEP**

What we have here is a six-song offering of pure Revlon Rock; an infectious, unapologetic serving of good timey glam punk replete with bangs, false eyelashes and lipsticked pouts. This is basically a cheeky melange of early '70s glammy cock rockers like the New York Dolls, Sweet and T Rex. Picture the Alice Cooper Band without the guillotines and the boa constrictors and the songs about dead people. It's a formula—like fat guys walking into sliding glass doors—that never gets old. Good catchy clean fun. —Aphid Peewit (Intravenous)

SAGE FRANCIS:**A Healthy Distrust: CD**

The beats are good, and the man certainly has some rhyming skills and a smooth flow, but I kept thinkin' "Eminem's whiny little brother" when I listened to him ask God not to take any more of his friends, and a couple more songs elicited the same response. In short, this is quasi-socially conscious hip-hop that misses the mark a little too often. —Jimmy Alvarado (Epitaph)

SATELLITERS, THE:**Hashish: CD**

I bought a Satellites record what feels to be about ten years ago, and the only thing I really remember about it was that it looked way cooler than it sounded. "Hashish," however, filed under "Psychedelic Garage Punk" as the cover requires, actually sounds about as good as it looks: I am unsure as to whether this calls for a pat on the back for the band, a kick in the pants for the graphic designer, or, as a mere example of regression to the mean, none of the above. Be that as it may, although I quite understand why many people gravitate toward That Which Is To Be Filed Under Psychedelic Garage Punk—I mean, it's kind of a fun aesthetic, what with all the inherent promises of "BIKINI GIRLS! CHELSEA GIRLS! PSYCHEDELIC GIRLS!" and cool lettering and Riots on Sunset Strips and what-not—I've always thought that the universe's existing reserves of this music were far in excess of my projected lifetime demand for it, so, like, ah, why bother? I personally can scrape by quite nicely by merely spinning a *Pebbles* or *Nuggets* type collection every so often, and therefore have no pressing need to cram my dome with covers of We the People's "You Byrn Me Up and Down" and songs with titles like "1969—The End of Time," but if you're looking for this kind of thing, I think you've found it. **BEST SONG:**

"Anything I Do" BEST SONG

TITLE: Against my better judgement, "1969—The End of Time." But isn't it supposed to be "Tyme?" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Band conveniently provides French language version of "Wham Bam Thank You Mam" for those of you whose pent-up demand for Small Faces covers *en Français* was not slaked by Plastic Bertrand's 1978 version of "Sha La La La Lee." —Rev. Nørb (Dionysus)

SEX ROBOTS:**2004 Sampler: CD-R**

So, what would you say the odds would be that, two days in a row, I receive two completely different CD-R's in the mail, and both CD-R's contain the song "Put Anotha Rekkid On" by the Sex Robots? I guess if you're not a total douchebag, the odds are actually pretty good! In any event, it's been a while since I listened to any Sludgeworth or Naked Raygun, but those seem to be the associations these three songs are provoking (if I really wanted to be analytical, I might play this back to back with a Jawbreaker record, but, since Jawbreaker, unlike the Sex Robots, suck, I have no experimental materials of a Jawbreakerly nature in my Rock Lab) (nor do I intend to obtain any). Pop-punk which is neither particularly happy nor angry, nor, for that matter, particularly poppy, and appears to be the better for the absence of all three.



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Fuckin' STAUNCH. Not that this is the first time I've ever said this, but I **NEED MORE SEX ROBOTS!** BEST SONG: "Put Anotha Rekkid On" BEST SONG TITLE: "Put Anotha Rekkid On" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Merry Christmas (I Don't Want To Fight Tonight)" is a really stupid song. -Rev. Norb (Roadhouse Tunes)

SHAM 69: Punk Singles Collection 1977-80: CD

Cleopatra released this collection of Sham's singles some years back (and they no doubt licensed it from somewhere else). Captain Oi has taken it, purtied it all up, added a few more tracks that were left off of the Cleopatra version, and sent it back out into the world. All the big hits are here, twenty-six in all, from "If the Kids are United" to "Hurry Up Harry," plus some rarities, like "What Have We Got," which was only available as a freebie given out at their shows. If by some fluke of nature you've never heard a single Sham song, this is the perfect place to dive in. -Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

SHONEN KNIFE: Burning Farm: CD

A record originally released in '83 (with extra live tracks from '84) by cute Japanese ladies who can barely play, and when in doubt, they sing the parts to cat food commercials: "Meow, meow, meow, meow." And when the words are formed, it's quaint stuff, like, "Heart is pitpat and dancing." Fun, easy-to-listen-to, proto-bubblegum stuff that requires absolutely no thought at all and can be played when parents or authority figures are listening in. -Todd (Oglio)

SHORTCUT TO NEWARK: Gearing Up for Getting Down: CD

It would be so rad if they'd make their video next to a pool because then h-jinks could ensue! Ringer-T pop-punk complete with strategically cropped shots of the one chubby dude with man-tits. -Megan (Sucka-Punch)

SIXTEENS: Fendi: CDEP

Fuzzy, heavily synthesized, and terribly dramatic goth rock that sounds like it was recorded in Siouxsie Sioux's trash can. -Kat Jetson (Hungry Eye)

SLOW SIGNAL FADE, THE: Through the Opaque Air: CD

The placement of the bass way up in the mix results in an occasional early Cocteau Twins feel, but for the most part this comes off like the Cranberries bucking for a funeral gig. Not too terrible on the whole, but the minimalist quality of both song structure and instrumentation fails to gel more often than not. -Jimmy Alvarado (Stroll)

SLURS, THE: The Problem with Rock and Roll: CD

"The problem with rock and roll is the

girls don't like it anymore. Yeoooo! [Guitar solo]" Well, if these guys are the ones making it, I can't say that I blame the girls. -Megan (Record Records)

SMOOSH:

She Like Electric: CD

This drum and keys sister duo of pre-teens are playing and writing better songs than three quarters of the self-important and "vital" bands out there. The collection of songs on this release is so chock full of fun and creativity that it's no wonder the band has already played shows with Sleater-Kinney and Death Cab for Cutie. Adorable without being cutesy, light-hearted without being fluffy, and smart without wondering if it was someone else who wrote the songs... Smoosh are deserving of your attention, and not just for novelty's sake. The only bummer? You probably won't be seeing them play live until school's out and they're on summer vacation. -Kat Jetson (Pattern 25)

SNITCHES GET STITCHES:

I Liked You Better

When You Were a Corpse: CD

This is the kind of album that makes me conflicted. As a fan of music, I'm stoked to hear Snitches Get Stitches because they play a sneaky kind of punk rock. I listened to the first song and kinda shrugged my shoulders, but it was enough to keep listening. So I did and by halfway through the third song, "I've Got a Thing for Violets," I was hooked. Something about it was so fresh and original that the disc went straight into my high rotation. I started listening to this album every day. That's good stuff. So why should I be conflicted? Well, because I have to review it, and what the fuck do you say about it? It starts off with a blast of hardcore, something in the vein of Negative Approach. Kinda tough. A few hooks in there. Before too long, though, the music starts to branch out. It drifts into territory where I can hear a Proletariat-type disjointedness, but the songs are strangely catchy. And there's an explosive fearlessness that makes me think of Big Black, but there's not much electronic going on here. Weird, self-indulgent samples between the songs, but I don't mind because the samples are short and the songs they're between are good. It's arty, but in a good way. It's a far cry from anything I've heard on Empty, but Empty has always been pretty good about keeping me on my toes. And so on. You can see the conflict. I guess I'll try to simplify it: I like it. It's different. I listen to over a hundred new bands a year. Most of them sound remarkably similar. This album is a bit of an oddball. I've reviewed about three or four hundred records; I'm rarely stumped. And here's a band that can stump me and get me excited. That's so cool. -Sean (Empty)

SPITTIN' VICARS, THE: The Gospel According to: CD

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Cocksparrer, though not quite as interesting or memorable. -Jimmy Alvarado (Radio Blast)

STAR STRANGLER: BASTARDS: Red, White, and Dead!: CD

I love music that, even when you're sitting in the softish nice confines of your domicile, you are made to feel like you are in the middle of the pit, bashing into other euphoric cavemen and feeling your blood copulate with the obscene amounts of alcohol in your system. Even though it's all conjured with electric guitars and whatnot, it is a joy that is atavistic and pure. This is surging political hardcore that has some of the same energy and the slight metal edge of Total Chaos at their best. I don't know how long Star Strangled Bastards have existed as a band, but I'm going to guess that I can thank the stumblefucks in the plutocracy currently reigning over this country (aka: Dubya, Cheney, et al) for the inspiration behind this slab of spleen-venting rage. More and more I'm thinking you can't go wrong with anything on Rodent Popsicle. -Aphid Peewit (Rodent Popsicle)

STATIONS:

Tune Out the Static: CD

Punk has become so fragmented that each scene does not support one another. Case in point: this band falls under the twenty-one-and-over bar punk scene. A kid with patches on his

or her hooded sweatshirt would probably not be into this. The average guy who actually has seen Black Flag and goes out once a month to drink beers with old buddies would go see this band. Even though this band, I believe, hails from Virginia, they have a very beach punk, SoCal sound with mid tempo numbers that have a drunk snottiness to them. They hold their own musically and aren't half bad. Better enjoyed live than at home, in my opinion. -Donofthedeath (Stations)

STEPBROTHERS:

Baby It's Over: CD

Rock'n'roll band with a bit of '60s influence added in to keep things interesting, which seems a moot effort considering how totally uninteresting this is. -Jimmy Alvarado (Licorice Tree)

STREET BRATS:

You'll Never Walk Alone: 7"

The song on side one fucking sucks. I think they were going for an Exploding Hearts-type thing, but it comes across as very awkward glam rock-influenced Clash, and it sounds like a truck commercial. Things get a bit brighter on the other side: two songs that sound a lot less contrived and almost remind me of Japan's Practice. The girl in the lower right picture on the cover is Ugly. (No, that's her name. It says so on the back.) -Ben Snakepit (Full Breach Kicks; www.fullbreach77.com)

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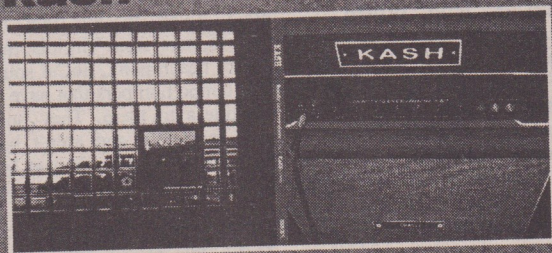
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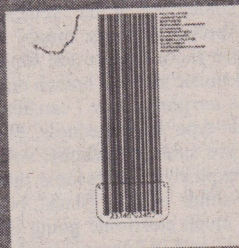


kash



beauty is everywhere & kash cd
Kash are four men from Turin, Italy. This disc is a compilation of their first two EPs, Beauty is Everywhere (2002) and Kash (1999), both of which were engineered at Electrical Audio by Steve Albini.

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STREET DOGS: *Back to the World: CD*

I got hit by a promotions person a couple of years ago to review a live show by this band. I responded by saying, "I don't like to go see bands I have no idea about. Send me a CD. I will think about it after I hear it." Well, that CD was the *Savin Hill* record. Man, the first thing I thought was, "Dad name, I hope the music isn't." I was thinking the vocalist sounded familiar. It's Mike McColgan, who used to sing for the Dropkick Murphys. Well, the music was superb: melodic street punk that was heartfelt and yet urgent. The track titled "Fighter" is one I still listen to. Here is their sophomore effort and that can always go two ways. The first album was a fluke and the second is terrible or it will be as good or better than the first. This is the latter. They continue on with great songs that are enjoyable and can be listened to over and over. The Celtic and reggae/dub track didn't get under my skin. If you can handle an acoustic track, the last track has a lot of emotion and seems sincere. Glad to see that they are on the right track. —Donofthedeath (Brass Tracks)

STRIKEFORCE DIABLO: *The Albatross and the Architect: CD*

Not usually my cup of tea, but this post punk band has elements that intrigue me. The bass sounds that emit out of the speakers are strong and stable with amazing tones. The drums are more than competent and add a thundering back beat. The guitars are pulled back a little to keep things forceful. The guitar sound has that hint of old blues meets southern rock flavor to it when he is not going into that dreamy, tonal sound. The singer reminds me of the singer from Rise Against for some reason. That is the first thing that struck me. I have to say that I was definitely interested and was not willing to throw the thing against the wall at first listen. —Donofthedeath (No Idea)

STRIKEFORCE DIABLO: *The Albatross and the Architect: CD*

Wily, inventive guitar rock that will get under your skin like a Southern preacher's homemade snake oil mixed with whiskey and downed in one gulp. "Plastic Astronaut" bumps and grinds like a game of rollerball, while "Between the Two" has some musical breakdowns that for some reason remind me of Tony Iommi, which kicks ass in my book! "Akimbo" is the best song on this one for me—"These walls have ears/whose ears have walls so paper thin/and our fading El Camino is home again" sings Drew Demaio over Kevin Scott's pummeling backbeat. The glue in this trio is bassist Matt Sweeting's propulsive bass lines—check out "Fear humongous" if you don't believe me. You would be a "sad humongus" if you don't buy this and keep it hidden in

your cookie jar. —Sean Koeppenick (No Idea)

STRYCHNINE: *Born in a Bar: CD*

The name of the album says it all! Street punk with a metal-type growly singer. Oh, they're from East Bay. So if you love all the typical TKO stuff or if YOU TOO were born in a bar (like a bad *CHiPs* episode), you'll want this CD. —Mr. Z (TKO)

STUBBY'S CRACK CO.: *Cuz Hell on Earth Ain't All It's Cracked Up to Be: CD*

There are some occasional flashes of very arty-punk brilliance, but for the most part, this plays like the soundtrack to a hillbilly hangover. —Jimmy Alvarado (Spenard Core, no address)

SUPERSUCKERS: *Live at the Magic Bag: CD*

If you're like me and you're "road worn and weary" from the inhumane amounts of emo bilge that's backed up and is spilling over everywhere, then this might be the disc for you. These Supersucker boys don't wear their welschmerz on their sweater sleeves nor do they recoil at the sound of a simple power chord. They are not anguished milksops reciting couplets from their diaries while wearing "What Would Morrissey Do" wristbands. Far from it. In fact, they might just be self-centered dicks. If they have a self-conscious, over-sensitive hair on their bodies, then it's buried in a crease somewhere that doesn't see the light of day much. These are grubby rock'n'roll reprobates of the first order; they are a cross between the business side of Gene Simmons' coddle, Evel Knievel and something that fell out of Joey Ramone's pant leg (when he was still around to have things fall out of his pant legs, that is.) This is a straight shot of swaggering Rock with a capital "R"—the bastard child of an unholy three-way tryst between '70s style arena rock, stripped-down punk and a spittoonful of outlaw country. Like all good sex shows, it's a concoction that's best taken live. And live this is—twenty-two tracks (counting a fake encore) of catchy, dirty, honest music that'll kick up the dust and stir up your lust for drink and drugs and misrule. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Eddie Spaghetti and the boys somehow manage, time and time again, to sustain this impossible balance between being struttin' cock rockers and being no-bullshit punk rockers and, most impressively, they come across as being absolutely genuine when they do it. Plus, they seem to genuinely have a helluva a good time, to boot. It's cool what you can accomplish when you don't take yourself so tight-ass seriously. —Aphid Peewit (Mid-Fi)

SWEETRACKS, THE: *Self-titled: CD*

First off, the cover—trying to look like you really like Bread or Steam or whoever that band was that posed in a

sauna is NOT cool. Also, one of the guys in the back seems to be enjoying himself at little too much in this shot—if you know what I mean. Being the unbiased critic that I am, I soldiered on, hoping this music would save it. Alas, this was not the case. Not horrible, but nothing really great that I haven't heard from a thousand garage bands in the last couple years. Stop trying to ape The Hives—they ain't doing nothing. The Chocolate Watchband didn't do thirty-five years ago. —Sean Koeppenick (Nicotine)

THERE IS A WORLD: *Superfluous Noise: CD*

I really appreciated the fact that they obviously put some thought into their lyrics, which often feels like it's becoming a dying art, and the fact they didn't attach those lyrics to some lame derivative of emo was especially nice. The bulk of their mid-tempo hardcore sound, however, didn't really move me all that much. Kept expecting them to lay the rage on thick, but they never quite delivered. Maybe next time. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.thereisaworld.tk)

THIS IS MY FIST!: *I Don't Want to Startle You but They Are Going to Kill Most of Us: 7"*

I have a feeling that the members of This Is My Fist have no idea how good they are. It's one of those things where they probably couldn't be as good if they did. TIMF bring a raw, sentimental take to a slightly folk-influenced sounding, fast-paced punk outfit. The lyrics are heartfelt and sung like it might just be their last chance to get the words out. This is better than finding twenty bucks in your pocket when you thought you were broke. —Megan (Left off the Dial)

TICONDEROGA: *Self-titled: CD*

Atmospheric rock from this three-piece from Raleigh, North Carolina. Hard to tell who plays what since they all switch off on instruments—one dude even plays a contrabass, which I'm sure sounds pretty wild. With this outfit, it feels like the mood is key. "A Welt" and "Arrowhead" are especially rocking tracks. For some reason, one track brought up creepy images of Jeffrey Dahmer, but I can move past that. The For Carnation and Slint come to mind at some points on this disc, but Ticonderoga actually mines their own sound on this debut. Ticonderoga sometimes sounds quiet and sad at the same moment. Sometimes that's just in one chorus. —Sean Koeppenick (Fifty Four Forty Or Fight)

TOTAL CHAOS: *Freedom Kills: CD*

These guys have been dead in the water for me way before I have received this CD for review. I have heard stories about this band from many credible people here in Los

Angeles that have been around a long time. It just left a bad taste in my mouth. The appearance is another thing. They always looked like they were put together too perfectly. The uniform of leather and studs. The spiked hair perfectly proportioned. Poster children for cartoon punks. The promo pictures looked like they were professionally done for a glam metal band. I have been at records stores and heard their output, but not enough to pay attention or shell out my hard-earned cash. Since this is sitting in front of me, I have to take a hard listen. I hate to admit it, but this release is pretty good. Sure, I can pull out the GBH, Conflict, Exploited and Motörhead references in their songs, but this time around, they play it well. The production is better than what most bands that play this style ever get to record in. With the raving comes my negativity. The packaging is way too professional looking and over-photoshopped and trying too hard to look authentically punk. It looks like they are specifically targeting the Hot Topic/Warped Tour crowd. Well... maybe they are. The cover of the Misfits' "Attitude" was subpar. They should have stayed away from that one. Not musically their style. Also the cover of Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It" is total cheese. If they wanted to be a glam metal band, they can just put their hair down and put on some makeup. I didn't find it fun or funny. —Donofthedeath (S.O.S.)

TROUBLEMAN: *The Last Show: CD*

In addition to the music, all good rock'n'roll records include the following topics: drinking, fighting, cheap floozies, and rock'n'roll. Thus *The Last Show* may officially be dubbed a good rock'n'roll record. These eleven tracks re-induce my juvenile rock fantasies (drinking, fighting, and chasing cheap floozies in a fog of Blatz and Jim Beam), and make me think of the Black Crowes meet the Joneses: knife-edge tunes with a twangy, Southern mentality lurking in the background, and just the right amount of sloppy drunkenness to provide an air of authenticity and credibility to go with the all-around fun and mayhem. Good stuff. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Offbeat Productions)

TURPENTINE BROTHERS: *We Don't Care About Your Good Times: CD*

This would be The Animals meets the Doors, if Eric Burdon hadn't been one hell of a rockin' little man and Ray Manzarek never did anything interesting on keyboards. Non-offensive, but not that interesting either. —Megan (Alive)

TWENTY2: *Unstable: CDEP*

The cover artwork on this reminded me of the artist who used to graphics for Santa Cruz Skateboards back in the '80s. Well in that theme, this sounds like another band for the Warped Tour set. **RAZORCAKE 99**

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Watching the bonus videos, it looks like they, have already played one even though they don't mention it. Melodicore for the newbies. -Donofthedeat (New School)

TYRADES, THE: *On Your Video: 7"*

Lotsa people have said that the Tyrades are more of a singles band, like they're more suited for a 7" rather than an LP. I don't understand. What the fuck does that mean? The full-length is seventeen minutes long. Yeah, man, nine songs by one of the best bands out there is total fucking overkill. Anyway, this is single number six and it's great, great stuff. The title song is a completely fucked, snarling mid-tempo dirge that sounds like the record is warped; it's a beautiful thing. The two songs on the flip are more of the raw, manic, on-the-verge-of-falling-apart variety that's made the Tyrades, well, not exactly famous, but at least popular amongst people who would be attracted to a band that puts out seventeen-minute full-lengths. They should go on tour soon. -Josh (Smart Guy)

TYRADES: *On Your Video: 7"*

I think these tracks (one long one and two on the other side) were recorded during the same time as the full-length. It has a similar sound, which I'm not as fond of as the other 7"s. Now, this is the Tyrades, so it's damn good. There's just a lot less going on sound-wise in this recording, and I just feel like I'm missing out a little. It also feels a little choppy than other recordings, but still a solid 7" worth picking up if you've already heard them and want more. Just not the record I'd start someone out on. -Megan (Smart Guy)

UNABOMBERS, THE: *It's Not That We Don't Love You, It's Just That We Don't Care: CD-R EP*

A treble-saturated squall of Finnish bashing around vaguely reminding me of Los Ass-Dragers in that globally-prized Red Bull™-quaffing manner specific to the rabid European mal-content! CD contains four songs but lyrics to seven, including this gem from the lamentably absent "Uppsala Hippie Commune": "You believe that frolic is hash / We believe in Darby Crash." As High Enlightenment, this stuff's got a ways to go, but as far as a quick shot of pure exhilaration goes, it's certainly way better than that new Budweiser™ crap with the caffeine in it. "Take the Danish brownies out of your rectum." BEST SONG: "Ridge Forrester" BEST SONG TITLE: I'll go with "Uppsala Hippie Commune" for twenty, Alex. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: DEN SOM LISTAR UT TEXTEN TILL JUST A WAR VINNER EN DÖNNERDATE MED VALFRI UNABOMBERSMEDLEM. -Rev. Nørb

VACANCY, THE: *Heart Attack: CD*

I could be completely wrong here but this band reminds me of the Foo Fighters, Urge Overkill, Helmet, or Jimmy Eat World. But I couldn't sit through a full song. -Donofthedeat (A-F)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *1382 The Persian New Wave: Underground out of the Islamic Republic of Iran: LP*

Iran hasn't been successful in winning the war on its black-market trading or Internet downloads, but it has pretty much outlawed music as a whole, so it is not surprising for one to assume that a country whose fundamentalist religious leaders have called Shakira "devil music," would have no punk scene whatsoever. Ten-year-old Tian An Men Records has disproved these assumptions, however. This label has been dedicated to pressing truly underground punk music from around the world (Kosovo, Madagascar, soon Iraq) for years, and they've put out yet another gem. This 12" comp has music that is so underground that the only place to play, practice, or record this stuff would be in the bedroom. Ah, the true essence of punk: 100 percent DIY. Ranging from garage to pop to satanic-sounding punk tunes, the music is all over the place, but in no way a turn off. Rest assured, when you get this not only are you buying a piece of history (THE FIRST EVER IRANIAN PUNK RELEASE), but you'll get a kick out of the originality and ingenuity of the bands (most of whom are probably using ancient equipment their fathers and mothers had purchased before the religious upheaval of the '70s!). I also found it interesting that the guy behind Tian An Men is a French Red Cross relief worker who has worked in Kurdistan, Iran, and Afghanistan—among other countries—and the many cities he's lived in are where he's encountered the punks whose music he's helped share with the rest of the world. -Mr. Z (Tian An Men 89)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *It's a Team Mint Xmas Vol. 2!: CD*

As a rule, I just don't like Christmas songs. They saturate the radio, television commercials, and cell phones, and by the day after Thanksgiving I'm begging for any other holiday than the one that gives us N' Sync, Céline Dion, and Rod Stewart crooning the classics. Even when the fabulous Man... or Astroman? covered "Frosty the Snowman," I was bored. At least with *It's a Team Mint Xmas* you get a chunk of creativity with thirteen of the fourteen songs here being originals. But still, the cover of "Do They Know It's Christmas" by Mint-Aid is just a bit too predictable; right down to the hokey Band-Aid name rip-off. I dunno, I guess I just think it's kind of a waste of time and talent. Think of your favorite band. Now imagine them doing a Christmas song. Now

imagine listening to that song in July. Yeah, my point exactly. -Kat Jetson (Mint)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *L.A.'s Rising Scene 2004, Volume 1: CD*

Low-budget recordings of indie rockers from L.A. I've never heard of any of them. So-so, nothing to write home about. -Heela (Intravenous)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Nostalgia Del Buio: 2 X CD*

Nostalgia Del Buio isn't just some record label sampler or a bunch of crappy leftovers from recordings. It is, in fact, quite the opposite. This double disc of forty-three (!) previously unreleased songs is a true labor of love, realized as a collaborative effort between Jessie Eva (The Vanishing) and Manuel Gutierrez (Cochon Records' head honcho), and mostly spotlights the happening-right-now and hot-to-trot Bay area music scene. I'd love to mention all the bands, and tell you just how fucking good nearly every song on this monster release is, but there simply isn't enough room. What you should know, though, is that this CD is an essential addition to your collection, and if you love the Phantom Limbs, New Collapse (as they once were), the Husbands, Lost Sounds, Kill Me Tomorrow, Von Iva, Glass Candy et al., you'll feel like you've struck gold. Go online to see if one of your favorite bands is spotlighted here. Chances are, there'll be at least a few. Spectacular! -Kat Jetson (Cochon)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *SOFLA, So Good, So What: CD*

It's nice to see more and more good music coming out of Florida these days. This compilation has some great bands that have been around for a while like Against All Authority, Runnamucks, and The Crumbs, but there are a handful of new ones worth checking out as well. Standouts on this twenty-one band compilation, aside from the aforementioned bands, are AC Cobra, The Skanks, The Hangovers, The Knumbskullz, Hopesick, Stay Hit, and The Getback. The music ranges from ska to hardcore with many genres in between. Not a bad listen for five bucks. -Toby (SOFLA)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *We Ain't Housewife Material: CD*

I guess being a bunch of chicks is a good enough excuse to throw together a comp, and it's a decent enough record, I guess, but I don't really hear anything here that makes me want to sit all these ladies down in a row and perform untold hours of cunnilingus upon each and every one of them in succession or anything. Wait a minute. Yes I do. Never mind. BEST SONG: Elvis McMan, "Slow Children" HOTTEST BAND: The three female members of Japan's The Soap are so UNGODLY hot that if you told me I

had my choice of doing all four members or nothing, I'd go for the quadruple band-pork in a New York Nanosecond. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I can't get The Soap's website to load in my browser, which is deeply frustrating but is also relieving me of the unsightly chore of Windexing my monitor every five minutes. Also, once Boris The Sprinkler's drummer, Ron, lost his Mensen t-shirt somewhere or another and it was a big deal of some sort. -Rev. Nørb (Dionysus)

VELCRO LEWIS AND HIS 100 PROOF BAND: *Ruin Everything: CD*

This CD is the aural equivalent of waking up one booze-doomed morning, and exulting in the fact that you have just slept with a member of Nashville Pussy, but having said exultation be quickly tempered by the fact that it was Blaine (if, of course, Blaine was from Chicago and everybody else in the band was also Blaine, and also from Chicago). I can explain things no better than Jake Austen's liner notes: "The punctuation on 'Rockin' & Drinkin' (Tonight)' is testament alone to this band's greatness. With such a title one need not even listen to the song to appreciate its magnificence, and perhaps one shouldn't." BEST SONG: "Covert Lover/Secret Sin" BEST SONG TITLE: "Rockin' & Drinkin' (Tonight)" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Liner notes thank Jim Knipfel, whom I was in Cub Scouts with. -Rev. Nørb (Blinded Tiger)

WATERPROOF BLONDE: *The Morning after the Night Before: CD*

I, for some unknown reason, picked up every pink album this time through, this being one of the pinkest. Pretty formulaic, female-fronted stuff. Quiet. Rock. Quiet. They say they're influenced by The Strokes. -Megan (Crash Avenue, no address given)

WRETCHED ONES: *Less Is More: CD*

Angry skin-style punk by these veterans of the genre. It's a style of music that can easily get repetitive and dull, but The Wretched Ones do it right and keep it loud, angry, and fun. Eighteen tracks with seven hidden ones. Lots of angst for your buck. -Toby (TKO)

ZS: *Karate Bump: CDEP*

You know that cell phone commercial where the little kid dressed up like a chicken goes, "Honk honk! I'm a goose!"? I don't know what the Zs are dressed up as, but they go, "Honk! Honk! I'm a pretentious jazzbo and I have just realized a composition based on the natural arhythm of my own farts over the course of one Earth day! Three compositions, actually! Listen to me fart and call me a genius!" -Cuss Baxter (Planaria)



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There are shit-tons of exclusive columns, interviews, and live reviews on there that we can't fit in the zine. Penis. Penis. Vagina. We also run a distro and sell a bunch of neat stuff.

We'd rather run a picture of the Riverboat Gamblers, though.



CONTACT ADDRESSES

to bands and labels that were reviewed either in this issue or posted on www.razorcake.com in the last two months.



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- **A-F**, PO Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
- **Alive**, PO Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510
- **Alternative Tentacles**, PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141-9092
- **Arclight**, 1405 Rio Grande St., Austin, TX 78701
- **Arkam**, 1925 Hwy. 69 S., Savannah, TN 38372
- **Art of the Underground**, 3234 Main St. Upper, Buffalo, NY 14214
- **Beercan**, PO Box 241, Berwyn, IL 60402
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- **Bleeding Bitch**, 4096 Piedmont Ave. #216, Oakland, CA 94611-5221
- **Blinded Tiger**; www.velcrolewis.com
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- **Clearly**, 195 Stanton St. #4G2, NY, NY 10002
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- **Collective**, PO Box 22172, St. Louis, MO 63116
- **Combat Rock Industry**, PO Box 65, 11101 Riihimaki, Finland
- **Contaminated**, PO Box 41953, Memphis, TN 38174
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- **Major Amerikan Label**, 951 B Calle Negocio, San Clemente, CA 92673
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"Not to put too fine a point on it, but only a heinous douchebag would pass this up."

—Josh

A.D.D. #14, \$3, 8 x 10 1/2, color cover, newprint insides, 48 pgs. I'm a long-time fan of *A.D.D.* Chances are, if you like *Razorcake*, you'll have an affinity for *A.D.D.*, too. Fuck, we like a lot of the same bands, have the same take on the equation of good music > "big bands" any day of the week, and you get the feeling while reading it that music's a necessity, not an accessory. In this issue is a fantastic tour diary by Russ Van Cleave of the Tim Version's invasion (okay, drunken mauling) of Japan, and informative interviews with Against Me! and the Grabass Charlestons. The only bummer is the dark backgrounds in a couple of the layouts. (Backgrounds are tricky. We've been stung a couple times by them.) I was really interested in Dave Disorder's take on Gaineville's Fest II, but went cross-eyed every time I tried to read it. Other than that quibble, if you're looking for fun-loving, beer-loving dudes who don't take themselves too seriously but know what they're talking about, *A.D.D.*'s the ticket. —Todd (A.D.D., PO Box 8240, Tampa, FL 33674)

AB #4, \$2, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 18 pgs. Imagine that you're the member of some earth-core, "information" collecting, punk clandestine organization, like the CIA except without any connection to "the man." Imagine that you receive a memo from this organization, in the form of a no-frills zine, in your mail on a monthly basis and you'd get *Ab*. Sometimes schizophrenic, sporadically arranged, but mostly interestingly informational. Example topics: "Learning to speak Canadian English," "I brush with sodium bicarbonate and calcium carbonate," "Health dangers and benefits of soy products," and my personal favorite "Using Gliders for Transportation." —Amy Adoyzie (Dwelling Portably, PO Box 190, Philomath, OR 97370)

APATHETIC MASS #1, \$1, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 20 pgs. I'm stoked that kids from Whittier, a sleepy suburb of Los Angeles, are making zines. Too bad the zine is clichéd and not-too-interesting. I've read it all before: rants for revolution, blah blah band interviews and then lots of cut and paste junk. Good try, kids, but try harder. —Amy Adoyzie (15358 Midcrest Dr., Whittier, CA 90604; apathetic-mass@yahoo.com)

BIASED REVIEWS AND MISQUOTES #2,

5 1/2 x 8 1/2, \$1, 18 pgs. An excerpt from their review of a cookbook: "This book boasts four hundred vegan recipes and I guess that's right if you count using different toppings on pizza to be a different recipe." That reminded me of how the Waffle House menus say that there's like a hundred thousand different ways to eat a Waffle House hamburger, but that's just an exponential calculation of every single topping (i.e., lettuce would be one, pickles would be two, lettuce and pickles would be three, etc.), and the way I see it, the only two ways to eat a Waffle House hamburger are dying of starvation and really stoned. They also review not wearing pants. I love it. —Josh (Michael Barton, 3230 Eagle Point West, Belton, TX 76513)

BLURT! #2, 5 1/2 x 4 1/4, \$2, 82 pgs. Lew, the guy who does *Blurt!*, seems to have a lot of potential as a writer. The storytelling is very easy to relate to, and his writing style is natural and easy-going; it makes for perfectly enjoyable reading. Here's my problem: all too often, people who a) like punk rock, and b) write stories, seem to trip over themselves trying to combine the two. It's great that Lew spends a lot of time listening to the Clash, but it's not exactly gripping material and it definitely doesn't need to be mentioned on what seems like every other page. What does it have to do

with the story? How does the story benefit from having stuff like that mentioned in such an offhand way? It may not seem like such a big deal, but it made me realize how much Lew relies on mining his own rut. Eighty pages is plenty of room for some kind of character development, some kind of light at the end of the tunnel, but instead, it's, "I pined for her, I made eyes at some other girl, I rode my bike and listened to punk records," over and over. I'm not trying to be harsh; like I said, it's enjoyable, but it's also really disappointing to see an obviously talented writer painting himself into a corner at such an early stage. —Josh (Lew Houston, 135 Wapwallopen Rd., Nescopeck, PA 18635)

BLURT, #2, \$2, 4 x 5 1/2, 110 pgs. This little cutie of a zine is filled with nothing but stories from its author's life, which might sound like the sort of pretentious, self-absorbed claptrap that fills so many "personal" or "confessional" zines. Not so. Lew Houston's stories aren't dark, depressing, self-aggrandizing or self-immolating ("My parents loved me..." he unabashedly states in a vignette about exploring the woods behind his childhood home). They have the simple ring of truth, and are related in clear, unostentatious, and often genuinely witty prose. Many of the episodes are mundane, which, as a lot of would-be memoirists would be wise to note, amplifies their appeal and poignancy. This guy's not bemoaning his life or trying to build a myth around himself, he's just telling his stories — about his childhood, his friends, his adventures in punk rock — and leaving the reader to draw their own inferences. His writing is also marked by a self-awareness and humility (but not disingenuous "I hate myself" shit) that's remarkably rare in the zine world. The best vignettes are about trying to be a punk in Bumfuck, as in "It's Still Like This": "I'd love to

tell you that I met other punks in the hills and that we carved forties out of logs, ran extension cords from our back porch, spiked our hair with pinesap and wrote our own songs about living in the woods. But that never happened." Sort of like a punk rock, unillustrated version of *American Splendor*. The design is black and white, clean and sharp, with just enough attitude to make it distinct. I read this one from cover to cover and found certain bits rattling in my head for days afterward. Nicely done. —Brian Howe (Vinylaprintprint c/o Lew Houston, 135 Wapwallopen Rd., Nescopeck, PA, 18635)

CRIPPLED BY DEPRESSION #2, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, 52 pgs.

Basically what this guy did was post a bunch of funny personal ads on the internet to see if anybody would respond. A bunch of people did, and this zine is made up of their correspondence. Like I said, it's funny. At the end of the zine, he talks about how he never met face-to-face with any of the people that contacted him, which strikes me as odd because he actually seems to have some chemistry with some of them. And of course, he responds to some people with that classic line (Wasn't it from *Gone with the Wind*?), "So do you want to fuck or what?" Not as funny as the stuff that was in *Genetic Disorder* a couple of years back, but well worth reading if you're the voyeuristic type. —Josh (Mishap, 941 56th St, Oakland, CA 94608)

DIRT CULTURE, #11, Free, 8 1/2 x 11, newsprint, 96 pgs.

This Las Cruces, New Mexico-based zine covers that unique scene where punk, hardcore and metal all walk hand in hand; a land populated by Hydra Head bands, beer cans, and moshing in the grandstand. In *Dirt Culture* you can find live show reviews, a couple of band interviews (like Artimus Pyle and I Farm) as well as ass loads of CD

reviews. Printed before the election, there's a smattering of "get out and vote" stuff littered through out the pages. Not a bad read when you're on the shitter, but there's nothing in *Dirt Culture* that makes you want to pick it up again and again (except maybe locale—like if you live in New Mexico). Biggest complaint here: the reviews section doesn't list the bands in alphabetical order. Makes it difficult to reference in the case of reading a review of a band that sounds interesting but then having to scour all the pages to find it again. —Greg Barbera (*Dirt Culture*, PO Box 4513, Las Cruces, NM 88003)

DUDES MAGAZINE #5,
8 1/2 x 11, \$5, 100 pgs.

Now, I know that reading isn't as high up on the list of Dudes Priorities as, say, pounding Heavies, getting mad lifted, or scoping whirlybirds, but hear me out on this one. For about the same price as a Big Bell Value Meal at the Tock, you could get a hundred pages of the finest in Dudes Literature, PLUS a CD full of soon-to-be-classic bad jams! Not to put too fine a point on it, but only a heinous douchebag would pass this up. If you don't stay up to date on your Dudes News, how will you know whose new nickname is Sergeant Soda? How will you know whether or not there's some bunk potatoes in the stew? How will you know what Big Time says to Dudes when he senses that they are rushin' things a bit? Not reading *Dudes Magazine* is like buying yourself a one-way ticket to Bunk City. —Josh (Dudes Mag, 714 Zeiss Ave., Lemay, MO 63125)

FURY, THE #11, \$1,

5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 40 pgs. Chicago-based zine that begins with a story about cocaine, and I ain't complaining cause it's not some hipster-drenched, "Guess who I snorted with," essay—it's practically an academic study on the effects of the war on drugs in Bolivia. When was the last time you nerded out about coke? Speaking of nerding out... Follow three dudes as they deck out like certifiable *Revenge of the Nerds* nerds for "Nerd Night 2" where they hit up some booty clubs and steal women from the firm grasps of their men. I love it when the underdog gets some. —Amy Adoyzie (Mark Novotny, 5413 6th Ave., Countryside, IL 60525)

JUNIPER, THE #2,

\$0.37 (postage), 8 1/2 x 11, 4 pgs. In our age of fluid identity and capital-S Selfhood, everyone has the right to be identified however they choose, in terms of gender, race,

genre or political affiliation. So while *The Juniper* seems more like a pamphlet you'd pick up at your local anarchist bookstore than anything you'd think of as a zine, if it wants to be called a zine that's fine by me. Dealing with issues of sustainable living, *The Juniper* #2 is basically a good-natured polemic about how science is great, but scientists aren't always to be trusted, since they're easily corrupted by "bloodsucking corporations" and "The Man." This admonishment sets the stage for an argument for self-sufficiency through community gardening, and Dan Murphy's reviews of communal gardens in Boise are quite a bit more thoughtful and extensive than most music zine reviews. This zine's very specific purview makes for a limited audience, but if you're living in a co-op house and do a lot of composting, it's probably right up your alley. —Brian Howe (Dan Murphy, PO Box 6352, Boise, ID, 83707, messyelephant@hotmail.com)

KIMOSABE #2
& **LAZYBONES #3,**
5 1/2 x 8 1/2, \$1 each, 24 pgs.

Two issues of the same zine. The name changed but the premise didn't so it gets one review instead of two. It's your basic glimpse into a dude's life: getting laid, getting high, hating work, riding the bus, eating, etc. Written well, seems like a nice guy, probably makes all his friends laugh when they go out for pizza, but I can't say that there's anything about either issue of this zine that makes it stand out from any other zine out there. Oh, wait, yes I can. *Lazybones* has the raddest cover art ever. I'm seriously considering getting it tattooed on me. —Josh (Marc Parker, 2000 NE 42nd Ave #221, Portland, OR 97213)

L.A. SCENE REPORTER #13,

Free, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 6 pgs. Cripes, it's the "Best of L.A./2004" issue and running at six pages, it seems that L.A. might be slim pickings, especially considering that the scope of the bands/music that were chosen for various "Top 5's" seem to always include some variation of Mika Miko, Kill Radio, or Naked Aggression. If I wanted some teenager's myopic "Best of" list, I'd build a faulty time machine and revisit myself back in the day and read one of my old lame zines. —Amy Adoyzie (Nick G., 312 W. 8th St., LA, CA 90014)

PAPING, #11 "Us and Them",
\$8, 8 1/2 x 11, 64 pgs.

I know that eight dollar price tag is hefty, but man, this zine's design is fucking gorgeous. I wish I had the

technical jargon to describe it properly. In lay terms, it's got a really nice, textured cardstock slipcover with some abstract painting in greens and browns that goes over its equally nice regular cover. It's got thick, sturdy pages, and really smooth grayscale inking. It just looks like money. The content itself is all comics and drawings, and it's worth mentioning that the noted Rough Trade musician Jeffrey Lewis is a contributor. These aren't amateur doodlings that get by on charm, these are professional or borderline-professional artists and cartoonists plying their trade, many in the *Love and Rockets* or *Blankets* style of skewed soap opera, others in Dan Clowes-type surrealist misanthropy or kitsch. Can something be this professional, cost eight bucks and still be considered a zine? You be the judge. —Brian Howe (Paping, PO 128, 45 E7 St., NYC, 10003, www.paping.org)

POOL DUST, #30, \$2, 8 1/2 x 11,
black & white, newsprint,
lots of pages without numbers
Skate zine for old schoolers who chug tall boys of Bud while doing grinds over the deathbox. For fans of Jay Adams, Smut Peddlers and Nichols/Charnoski films. Imagine a *Thrasher* from 1984 made in Arizona and you've got the basic aesthetic of *Pool Dust*. —Greg Barbera (Chris Lundry, PO Box 419, Tempe, AZ 85280-0419)

PROFANE EXISTENCE, #46,
\$5, 4 x 6, glossy cover,
bound, newsprint, 100 pgs.
What you have here is one hundred pages of essential reading for the crusty, anarcho-punk set. Interviews with Witch Hunt, Wolfbrigade, and The Profits, scene reports, in-depth coverage of the C.L.I.T. Fest, and more angry anti-government sentiment than an Oi Polloi/Zegota show. It's good to see bullet belts and liberty spikes still mean something to some people. You wanna smash the system? *Profane Existence* will help you get started. Informative and engaging. Headquartered on Minneapolis, read worldwide. —Greg Barbera (Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408)

ROCK N ROLL PURGATORY

#14, \$2.00, 8 1/2 x 11,
photocopied, 40 pgs.
I love this zine. I read it front to back. This zine reaches into the chest cavity of Billy Music, yanks that ol' heart out, and sits there sucking the warm blood out. Wonderful interviews—including Star Devils and Kill the Hippies—coffin reviews, music reviews, show reports, and a custom ride spotlight. What more can you ask

for? It's all here! Thumbs up *Rock N Roll Purgatory*! —Rob Ruelas (Rock N Roll Purgatory, PO Box 771153, Lakewood, OH 44107; www.rocknrollpurgatory.com)

ROCKNROLL PURGATORY

#14, 8 1/2 x 11, \$2, 48 pgs.
Pretty much one of the best music rags around. Not pretentious (the cover is a picture of a gal sprawled out next to a toilet), not elitist (the cover is a picture of a gal sprawled out next to a toilet), and not so high and mighty that they can't take jabs at themselves (the cover is a picture of a gal sprawled out next to a toilet). They know their shit (toilet!), they're excited about the music that they cover, and it doesn't get much better than that. Super nice, too. The highlight for me was the hilarious interview with Kill the Hippies, but then again, the whole issue is pretty strong. Recommended. —Josh (PO Box 771153, Lakewood, OH 44107)

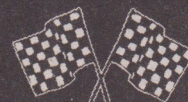
ROCTOBER #38, \$4.00,
8 x 10 1/2, color newsprint cover,
newsprint insides, 111 pgs.
Roctober is a fascinating read. This issue covers both a lot of rock and TV, the juxtaposition of the two, with interesting little tidbits about significant events in T.V. history thrown in, especially noticeable were the tributes to those who have passed into the great beyond and left impressions on both. It's also packed with tons of interviews galore, including Snoop and King Diamond, and reviews galore! Thumbs up to *Roctober*. —Rob Ruelas (Roctober, 1507 E. 53rd St. #617, Chicago, IL 60615; www.roctober.com)

SCAM #5,
8 1/2 x 11, \$5, pretty thick
Like they say, changes had to come. Iggy Scam now wishes to be known by his birth name, Erick Lyle, and this whole issue feels more mature. It's like he finally realized that if you want to get rid of the honkey establishment, you have to do something more than publish tips on how to steal sodas from vending machines. You kinda have to show some positive things, too, like renovating an abandoned storefront to make a community center where people that feel left out of the mainstream don't have to be reminded of the gentrification surrounding them. Or wheatpasting over anti-homelessness billboards in order to question the Care Not Cash initiative in the Bay Area. It's nice to read about what people in the punk community can do when they get motivated. Fucking commendable. —Josh (Erick Lyle, PO Box 40272, SF, CA 94140)



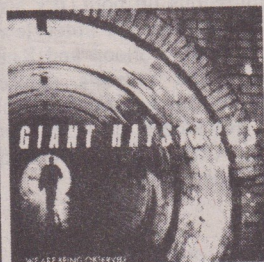
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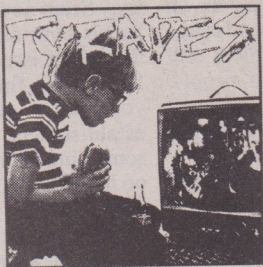
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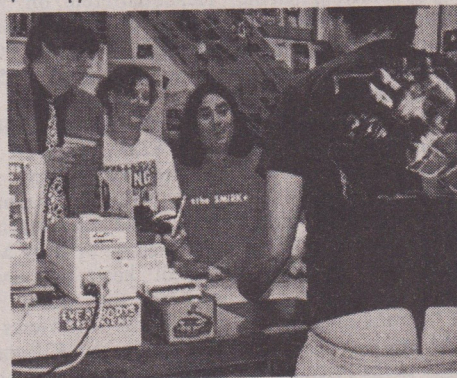


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STATIONAERY #2, Free, 6 3/4 x 9 3/4, photocopied, 21 pgs. Literary zines are pretty touch and go, mostly filled with painful poetry and two-dimensional fiction. Reading trite shit like that is akin to skimming a freshman English major's journal, a common trigger for murder-suicides. Fortunately, *Stationaery* didn't induce an urge to kill and it was a rather pleasant read. Stories and poems from a diverse crew of writers that lulls you into a comfort zone, like you're hearing stories from friends of friends. —Amy Adoyzie (4456 Avenue de l'Hotel-de-Ville, Montreal, Quebec H2W 2H5, Canada; www.stationaery.com)

TAKE ON YOUR HEROES #5, Free, 8 1/2 x 11, photocopied, 28 pgs. Here's the deal: this is one of those zines that interviews bands and record labels and reviews stuff. Sounds harmless enough, and it is, which is where it falters. It's pretty superficial and nothing too in depth. A description of this issue from the zine itself reads, "features The Muffs, Knife Fight, Deep Enough to Die, No Idea Records, A Day in Black In White, The Top 120 Punk Records and Record Reviews." And it's exactly that, nothing more, nothing less.

But you can't complain much, cause it's free. —Amy Adoyzie (PO Box 98395, Atlanta, GA 30359; www.stompandswagger.com/toyh)

UGLY PLANET #2, \$3.95, 7 1/2 x 10, glossy cover, off-set, 64 pgs. Awesome zine featuring insightful interviews with Noam Chomsky, artist Fly, Ozomatli, Trans Am, Blood Brothers, Jean Grae, artist Winston Smith and more! Plenty of zines aspire to this type of thoughtful journalism, but many fail without ever coming close. —Amy Adoyzie (Ugly Planet, PO Box 205, New York, NY 10012; www.uglyplanet.com)

VERBICIDE #12, \$3.95, 8 1/2 x 11, 64 pgs. I like *Verbicide* for its willingness and ability to maintain a liberal point of view without being in the least bit whiny or self-righteous, instead opting for a thoughtful, even-handed approach towards its agenda. Included per its s.o.p. are interviews, fiction and poetry. The cover's theme is nice and simple, "Have record label will rock!", and makes good on it's boast by including interviews with Mike Park of Asian Man, Dave Crider of Estrus, and Gregg Ginn of SST. They were fairly interesting interviews, but

tended to come off as a bit standardized (I kept waiting for the tough questions that make interviewees want to slug interviewers). Also included is an interview with Protect organizer Grier Weeks. The fiction here is pretty good, particularly Jennifer Dauphinais's creepy "Spokane" and Christopher Staley's "Da Jump Off," which seems to tip its hat to the cryptic, super-short style pioneered by Hemingway so long ago. —The Lord Kveldulfr (www.scissorpress.com)

ZISK #9, 7 x 8 1/2, Xeroxed, 3.28 ERA. Baseball is full of characters. And the characters who fill baseball and the people who follow them take their shit seriously. And for those of you, we have *Zisk*. I grew up in the suburbs of Maryland, just south of Bal'mer where Earl Weaver was meaner, angrier, and drunker than Billy Martin and where Cal Ripken, Jr. is the patron saint of the sport. Memorial Stadium was cool with its cheap local brew (National Bohemian a.k.a. Natty Bo—\$3 a 12-pack when I was a freshman in college), bleacher seating, and old school aesthetic. Then they built Camden Yards. Which is still a really cool place to see a ball game, especially when your old

college roommate works for the team and hooks you up with seats three rows behind the home team dugout or in deep left center right behind poster boy Brady Anderson, he of the long sidebars and asexual orientation. That said, if baseball has been an important part of your life, you'll find yourself relishing in the dedication and hard work put into an issue of *Zisk*. I now live in the land of the Durham Bulls, who like the O's, have forsaken the classic, old school vibe of a run down stadium in favor of new school, fresh brick. Oddly enough, I believe the same people who designed the new Bulls stadium designed Camden. Or at least they used one as an example for the other. Upside is that the Bulls games are \$5 a pop, not so for the Orioles. That said, I hate baseball and have no use for *Zisk*, but when I send it to my old college roommate, he is going to shit himself in excitement... and then probably discuss it with color commentator Jim Palmer over beers at the bar while on the road in some godforsaken place like Cleveland. —Greg Barbera (*Zisk*, 801 Eagles Ridge Road, Brewster, NY 10509)



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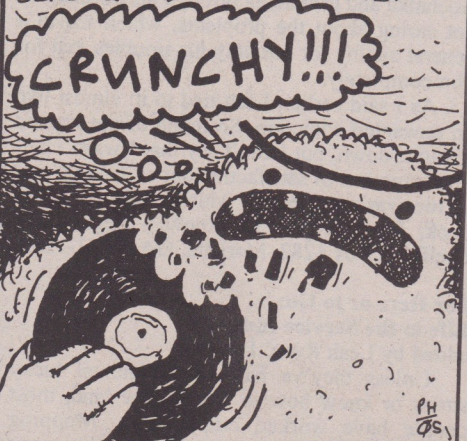
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American Elf

by James Kochalka

I first heard of James Kochalka through Ben Snakepit. I found the *American Elf* website (www.americanelf.com), and started reading some of the posted strips. It had a strange effect on me: I didn't necessarily like it, but I kept reading. When I saw this in the review pile, I moved it, and moved it daily, but didn't commit to taking it for about two weeks.

This is a collection of over five years of Kochalka's daily one- to four-panel journal comics. He draws himself as an elf, his friend as a dog, another friend kind of looks like a walking popover, and the majority of everyone else looks probably pretty close to how they appear in real life, except with only one eye, or no eyes, or sideways eyes. I was hooked quickly and read through the whole thing during three nights before-bedtime reading sessions. The majority of the strips concentrate on his relationship with his wife, his cat, several friends, and himself.

There were more than a few panels that had me laughing out loud, but those were equalled, if not outnumbered by those that just left me with little more than a "huh." The relationship Kochalka has with his cat, Spandy, actually made me laugh the most. I'm not much of a cat person, but the Kochalka interacts with Spandy as if she is human, which actually becomes really funny.

It's impossible for me to read this, let alone write about it, without drawing a parallel to *Snakepit*. There is something addictive in learning about characters/authors/artists through not only the highlights, but also through the small and mundane daily acts. Unlike how I feel towards Ben, I don't know if I'd like to know Kochalka. He seems like the kind of person who I would know as an acquaintance, but we'd never get beyond that because we approach similar situations in very different ways. This might be why I felt like it was too awkward to be comfortable reading it. I wanted to step in and tell him to take back his words, or to let something go. I got annoyed that so many of his downfalls were, to me, transparent. I could see the outcome when the triggers had barely begun. My annoyance came because I thought the problems were easily avoidable, but I'm sure that if anyone had a chance at an objective look at the mistakes and choices I've made, those decisions could easily appear avoidable just as well. The uneasiness was caused by feeling trapped between liking Kochalka and grimacing through his troubles, or not caring about the problems, which led to a general apathy for not only his troubles, but for him completely.

As I said earlier, I felt tied to it: almost like an unwanted addiction. So much of me wanted to put it down, but I can't say that I wasn't getting some sort of satisfaction out of it. What part of me was satisfied by which elements in the book, I'm not sure I'll know. —Megan (Top Shelf, PO Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282)

For Here or to Go:

Life in the Service Industry

edited by Leah Ryan, 196 pgs.

Unless they've had a monumental lucky streak or know how to live off the land, most people have worked crappy jobs. Mopping floors. Cooking chicken wings. Cleaning poop out of urinals in casinos.



Delivering pizzas. Menial jobs for low wages. Most of us look forward to the day when we no longer have to work those crappy jobs. *For Here or to Go* is, as you may have guessed, a look back at some of those crappy jobs. Some of them are out-and-out short stories, some of them come across as a string of enjoyable anecdotes, and there are a few brief interviews with random workers. For me, the interviews don't really fit in, not because the people have nothing to say but because the interviews are so short that they seem like more of an afterthought. At any rate, the book succeeds because it's so matter of fact. There's no righteous Communist rhetoric about the toil and the suffering of the people, they don't try and paint themselves as martyrs just because they've had to deliver pizzas, and it's definitely not a hard-hitting, *Current Affair*-style exposé. It's like listening to a friend who has logged a lot of hours in restaurants and really knows how to tell a story. If you're currently working a crappy job, it'll cheer you up to know that somebody, somewhere, has it just as bad as you, and if you're not currently working a crappy job, it'll make you very thankful for that. —Josh (Garrett County Press, 828 Royal St. #248, New Orleans, LA 70116)

Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order

by Gene Yang, 100 pages

I set out to create a comic strip last year. I bought the best art supplies I could afford, wrote scripts, made sketches, and even drew one complete strip that had me guffawing at my drawing table. Then I did the inking. Then, I realized that the character's squat and turned up nose in one panel needed more exaggeration. I noticed he was right-handed, though the person who inspired the strip is a lefty. I saw that a can of chili in the third panel was overpriced. In short, I realized I'd have to re-do it. Five months later, I still haven't. You know why? Because art is slave labor. The details inherent in drawing comics are so demanding that I'm now taking art and screenwriting courses so that I can return to my strip with the skill and attention it deserves.

So I sympathize with writer-artist Gene Yang, who in the "Afterword" in his soul-searching manga-style comic book *Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order* writes, "Even with a sparse (or as some would call it, lazy) style like my own, pencilling and inking a single page still take hours. A day's worth of drawing leaves my hand cramped and my neck stiff. I'm not sure how comic book artists who draw more detail than I do... deal with it.... The writing is even more agonizing...."

However, it's all in the details, and details are what *Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order* lacks. The ambitious, surreal story attempts to discern the difference between weakness and strength, deliverance and Armageddon. It pits high school sophomore Loyola Chin against her food-induced manifestations as she struggles with her weakened spiritual faith, an occasional manga theme. It's an engaging premise, and the surreal world Yang creates includes alien life forms and DNA-probing "eyeball robots." It also features a pre-Columbian mentor/love interest named Saint Danger who runs a secret society and has a penchant for sticking cables into young girl's noses. That's where the problems begin.

Saint Danger, reminiscent of the Watcher in the old Silver Surfer comics, theorizes that humankind's conquest of its environment has spelled the end of evolution, leaving it vulnerable to alien attack. After a much-too-long speech, Saint Danger reveals his easy solution—a simple answer from a simplistic, if well-intentioned, nemesis, which is symptomatic of a story with two-dimensional characters. We learn that Saint Danger no longer believes in God, but don't know why. Nor do we learn about his origins, which is the reason the climax fails to thrill. We don't know the Saint or feel threatened by him, so we don't care what happens to him—especially since the underdeveloped love story is unconvincing. Add to that a kid who uses food as a hallucinogenic, her obtuse friend, a stereotypically chubby klutz, and an otherwise challenging tale loses its fizz.

In all, *Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order* is a talky comic—low on action, character reaction and backgrounds, with a sensitive voice but hollow characters. Because Yang often treats us to ingenious angles—offering bird's eye views, a swooping time travel sequence, and imaginative dream scenes—it's evident that he is capable of much more, and I look forward to seeing it. —Karla Pérez-Villalta (SLG Publishing, PO Box 26427, San Jose, CA, <www.slavelabor.com>)

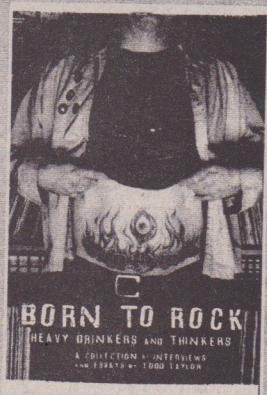
Please Feed Me: Punk Vegan Cookbook

by Niall McGuirk, 144 pgs.

Getting ready to raise a vegetarian child, much to the dismay of my family ("But the baby won't grow if you don't feed her meat..."), I'm always scoping out cookbooks, eager to learn new veggie recipes and test them out. I half-expected this cookbook to simply give instructions on meals with funny punk names like Squatter Squash Stew or Anarchy Beans and Rice. While I did come across a few interesting ones (such as Spinach and Ginger Bowel Loosener, Tasty Gourmet Punk Rock Baked Beans, and Tofu Pie Thingy), this book is actually more like two books in one. It's a retrospective on Dublin's Hope Collective, a group of friends (including author Niall McGuirk and his wife) who helped bring punk bands to their area, as well as a cookbook featuring recipes from the various bands who played these shows.

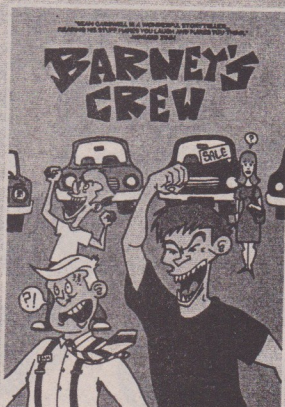
The book meticulously details the conception, trials and tribulations, successes, and ultimate demise of the Hope Collective, who set up shows from 1984 to 1999. The group started after McGuirk had successfully set up a local punk show and decided he wanted to get his favorite punk bands to play in his hometown, too. Along with some friends and a dollop of the

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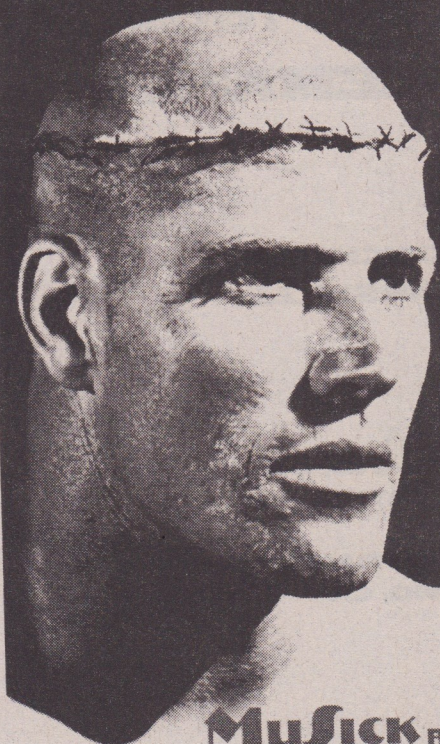
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DIY spirit, the Hope Collective helped brought bands like Fugazi, Bikini Kill, Chumbawamba, NOFX, Bis, Jawbreaker, Nomeansno, Refused, MTX, Los Crudos, Babes in Toyland and tons more to Ireland.

The recipes are placed in order by date of the contributing band's gig and each recipe is accompanied by an account of what happened at the show, and oftentimes, a flyer, picture and/or quotes by the band. Of course, not every single band responded to McGuirk's recipe request, but every Hope show during those fifteen years is listed at the end of the book, including all 283 bands that played and at what venue. Talk about thorough! If anyone ever wanted a history of Dublin's punk scene in the '90s, this is your bible.

As for the recipes themselves, they range

from the silly ("Red Stuff: beans, red stuff, add rice pasta or hair, cook and mix till smelly, then add bread and butter and pint of white blood, sit down and watch porn") and super easy to a bit more complicated with many more ingredients, but they all seem very do-able. I'm not so sure about vegan cheese (all the lacto-ovo vegetarians like myself can always substitute real cheese), but I've got to check out this TVP (some kind of soy protein) and nutritional yeast flakes. There are a lot of recipes for curries, pasta/noodle dishes, guacamole, stews, soups, beans, casseroles, and even several desserts. Most of the stuff is similar to what you'd find in any ol' veggie cookbook (including some of the more unappealing recipes like Lentil and Nut Casserole that seem to scream out "hippie!"), but it is interest-

ing to read recipes and anecdotes from some of your favorite punk bands and a ton of obscure ones as well. Personally, I'd like to try out the Pear and Cardamom Cake and Vegan Satay.

There's also an appendix at the end comparing weights, measures, and terms. Why terms? Because what we call zucchini and cilantro, our friends over the pond call courgettes and coriander leaves. And if you have a few recipes of your own you'd like to add, there are some blank pages in the back of the book for just that purpose.

So if you're in the mood for cooking up some yummy vegan grub while reading the tale of a scene that thrived through cooperation, activism, and the love of punk rock, grab this book for dinner. —Heela (Soft Skull, 71 Bond St., Brooklyn, NY 11217)



Bert Switzer: *Second Chance*: DVD

The pieces of reviews and blurbs on the back of the case all profess to the brilliance of the drumming of Bert Switzer, former skinman for the Boston-area bands Monster Island and the Destroyed, and for the most part those reviews are right: the guy truly is impressive. Where this DVD falls short, however, are the seemingly self-indulgent motivations in producing it. I really do want to believe that there was a call on the part of the masses for this vid, but it comes off much more readily as a blatant promotional tool than something produced to entertain, inform, or meet consumer demand.

A huge chunk of this video is devoted to watching Switzer perform drum solos, often in excess of three minutes. Yes, the solos are impressive. Yes, they get dull very quickly, if only because there are so many of them and they never seem to end. Moreover, they tend to be shot from one angle and one angle alone: dead center facing Switzer in a practice space. About half way through the DVD there occurs a solo that was very good, if only because some production value (different angles, close-ups, rudimentary computer enhancement, etc.) had been added to jazz up what I was essentially looking at for the tenth time at that point.

That is not to say that *Second Chance* doesn't have its strong points, though. The interviews with former bandmates are often quite interesting, especially that of Owen Maercks (sadly, that interview is far too short), and in the course one is presented with some wonderfully obscure footage and tales from rock'n'roll history, always a good thing. The most entertaining bit, though, was a conference-call jam between Switzer and former Destroyed frontman J.D. Jackson. But as with the footage of other bandmates, I felt that it was too short and seemed to be included for good measure rather than to provide a complete picture of Switzer's past and present. Topically, this is quite an interesting subject; a blurb from *Reviewer Magazine* claims that someone should make a documentary on Switzer. I agree, because as it is now, *Second Chance* can't stand on drum solos alone, and a good filmmaker could turn this into something truly worthwhile. —The Lord Kveldulfr (www.bertswitzer.com; www.onewayproductions.com)

Buried in the Sand:

The Deception of America: DVD

This film is a chilling—and often hard to watch—study of the crass over-simplifications and blood-thirsty zealotry of both the lap dogs of the far right here in America, as well as that of the Islamic extremists, presumably in Iraq, the country with whom we're presently at war. I, for one, feel that the impassioned patriots who put together *Buried in the Sand* should be applauded for presenting us with this brave and unblinkingly look at just what can go wrong when human heads and hearts get clogged up with absolute certainty. It takes no more than a minute or two into the film before we have the cow pie of certainty slapped into our faces when faux-anchorman Mark Taylor seats himself purposefully in the middle of a darkened set with chain-link fences all around. Even the cover of the DVD has the fence motif, with a determined looking Dubya (and Old Glory) on one side of the fence and a shabby Saddam (post spider hole) looking menacing on the other side. The producers are obvi-



ously fence-loving folks with a strong, pitbull-like territoriality streaks. (And, by the way, which side of the fence are YOU on???)

Looking stilted and grim, with a cheesy sanctimonious delivery that reminded me a little bit of the psychic "Criswell" in *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, anchorman-wannabe Taylor informs us in no uncertain terms that the "radical left and mainstream media" have deceived the American public about America's "moral obligation" to invade Iraq. He then not-so-slyly implies that *Buried in the Sand* is a reality check on the lies promulgated in infamous America-hater Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Soon we delve into the choppy video images, culled from God only knows where, of Freddie Mercury-looking guys in berets reading from the Koran just before breaking prisoners' arms with clubs and slicing their sinful tongues in half. Fingers and hands are hacked off as routinely as little kids cutting Play-Doh logs in half—except this "Play-Doh" squirts blood. The remainder of the film is a brutal,

often confusing, hodge podge of harsh, sickening images of human beings being sliced, diced, shot, blown up, ripped open, lashed, bludgeoned, stoned, beheaded, and fricasseed all, apparently, in order to assuage the lurid appetites of the Great God Allah. Certainty, whether it's religious or political or both, is a bad thing to have clogging up the works inside human heads, as this film surely attests to. As utterly gruesome as crimes against humanity are, the truth is that human rights violations, torture, and war crimes are taking place all over our hate-happy little globe, so the question then begs to be asked, what's America's "moral obligation" to those suffering similar fates in countries other than Iraq?

The funny—or sad—thing is that while the people behind this film seem confident that *B.I.T.S.* is a deft riposte to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the out-of-context, largely unexplained video images crammed into this film present a "focus" that is so recklessly unfocused that you come away thinking that either all Middle Eastern people are homicidal religious kooks or that the people who cobbled this snuff film together are simpletons of such staggering dimwitted-ness as to rival that of G.W. himself. *Buried in the Sand* paints its points with such a large, sloppy brush that it's virtually inevitable that some slower-thinking people will come away from the film with a dimly lit notion that all Muslims are to be regarded, at the very least, with utmost suspicion. Such an obvious, heavy handed attempt to ensnare people's fears and fire up their hate on such a purely visceral level is right out of Jingoism 101.

Interestingly, many of the people responsible for *B.I.T.S.* don't even reveal their full names in the credits at the end of the film, opting instead for anonymous abbreviations. I just think that seems a bit odd for such chest-thumpingly proud patriots as these. Surely Charlton Heston or John Wayne wouldn't wuss out and go by "Chuck H." or "J. Wayne." But maybe it's that these abbreviated souls, somewhere in the flickering storms rumbling in their neocortexes, have a vague sense that *Buried in the Sand* is an unintentionally multi-layered mess of all the naked, barbaric ugliness of both extreme religious zealotry and partisan political myopia knotted up together in a sloppy symbiotic 69 position. And that, furthermore, religious zealotry and partisan myopia are the two stinking ends of the rotten turd of so-called "faith-based" think-

ing (and to say that is to besmirch the good name of excrement). Unlike the people featured in this film and the people behind the making of this film, certainty is not my strong suit, but I can tell you this much: life only appears this black and white in the dilated eyes of true believers, on whatever side of the fence. I'm confident that *Buried in the Sand* is bound to be the *Plan 9* of propagandistic schlock-umentaries and a sure-fire boner-maker for the ghouls who are titillated by the *Faces of Death* genre. There will be some squeamish folks, I imagine, who will suggest that *Buried in the Sand* deserves to be buried in the litterbox. I don't agree. This film is too invaluable a study of Contracted Human Awareness; it lays bare, on more levels than the filmmakers realize, the most constipated backwaters of the human mind, where dogma and its procrustean enforcement tactics dwell. You would be hard pressed to find a more jarring illustration of what the Discordians mean when they say "convictions cause convicts." One final note, I would like to strongly recommend that you do not do as I did and watch this film while attempting to eat lasagna. —Aphid Peewit (www.buriedinthesand.com)

A Hundred Dollars and a T-Shirt: DVD

The sleeve says this documentary DVD contains over sixty-four hours of zine-type footage. What?! I don't think I watched all of it then. Or maybe I did? I don't know. But, really, who in their right mind would want to spend that much time watching interviews and zine festival footage? SIXTY-FOUR HOURS? I LOVE zines, but come on. I think the most important lesson found here is if you really are into the zine scene, you should spend your time doing what you do best: making amazing zines and circulating them. Per many of the zine-makers interviewed in the documentary, the only way to know what a zine is is to make one. So true. And if you are positive you can't make one due to lack of funds or originality, you are always welcome to go get some to read. There's no harm in that! Reading is fun!

So, this DVD may bore many zinesters, but what about the uninformed public? I'm pretty sure those who aren't into zines or have no idea what zines are, are not very likely to watch such a long, drawn-out film as this. Imagine you were someone who doesn't give a shit about what zines are or who makes them, but figure this could be an interesting documentary and you might as well figure out what the hype is all

about. Your thoughts might go something like this: "What a bunch of bored, nerdy white people. And all they talk about is themselves. There is nothing important or groundbreaking on here. This DVD sucks. I should have picked up the *Bush's Brain* documentary. Or maybe the Disinformation DVD collection. Damn!" The quality of the footage isn't spectacular, but I guess it adds to the DIY feel, and it's not like you'd expect special effects in a documentary about zines. I've written, put together, and read many a zine, and never have I said to myself "I wish there was a documentary about this"—have you?

Microcosm, I hate to say this, but this DVD stinks and it was a big waste of your money, not to mention my time. Two enthusiastic thumbs down. What am I gonna do with this DVD now? I can't even bring myself to give it as a gift and pretend I bought it for someone, because it sucks so bad. —Mr. Z (Microcosm)

Leatherface: Boat in the Smoke: DVD

Here's how I look at it: there has to be balance. For every baby-killing, soul-crushing, write-a-song-for-another-pool aging rocker like Eric Clapton in the universe that the national press seems to have an ever-lasting load of cum to supersoak society's ears with there has to be an opposite force of equal weight. A powerful force. That force is Leatherface. You could be an asshole and say this DVD is just "Old dudes standing virtually still," and to the uninitiated, you'd be right. They're not pretty to look at. They don't move a lot (barring the occasional patented "Frankie Shuffle"). Frankie's got a Lemmy Motörhead gruff voice. That's not the point. The point almost seems antiquated. This DVD has what Leatherface does best: write immaculate songs and play with hearts as big as barges while not shying away from the wars of existence. The way the threesome plays their instruments makes you believe they're making more than just sounds, but are shaping meaning out of thin air. The multi-camera footage and from-the-board sound is excellent. The DVD includes an entire fifty-seven minute show (peppered with songs both new and old), bonus songs from the band's hometown of Sunderland in 2001 (and Chris Wollard of Hot Water Music on rhythm guitar for "Not Superstitious"), and an interview with Frankie Stubbs. Wonderful stuff. I still get chills when I hear "Springtime." —Todd (www.punkervision.net)



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